

/// Straying away

 amethystcraig.tumblr.com/post/145745360119/the-story-of-vampire-michaela-vol-2-chapter-1

The Story of Vampire Michaela, Vol 2 - Chapter 1 (part 1)

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« Owari no Seraph: The Story of Vampire Michaela »

Volume 2, Chapter 1 - Map of the Future (part 1)

Blood.

Livestock gives them blood.

As once they're cursed by God, the 'vampires' who govern the world underneath are incapable of death.

For the sake of slaking their thirst, they need blood today as well.

“So you see, be quiet, submit, and give me your lifeblood!”

◆◆◆

From the back alley a shriek can be heard.

“Noooooooo! Stop! Don't touch me!

It's the voice of a young girl.

Yuu-chan who was walking beside, looks toward the direction of the scream.

"What?" he said as he heads to where the voice is.

Mikaela grabbed his arm.

“Wait Yuu-chan.”

“What Mika?”

“Where are you going?”

“There was a scream.”

“And?”

Yuu-chan stares at him with a face as if to 'what the hell?'.

Mika answers back,

“...I'm afraid we just can't afford helping someone out...”

They heard the scream again, louder this time.

“Damnit!”

Yuu-chan begins to run.

“Oh, come on, Yuu-chan!”

In the dark back alley, a twelve or thirteen year old girl was being forcibly pushed down by a pair of boys. Her pants and underwear are being pulled down exposing her white skin. Her eyes fill up with tears and dread.

The ones assaulting her were fifth- no sixteen year old boys, a naughty smile graced their faces.

On the grounds ruled by the vampires, humans attacks humans.

One of the boys said while beating her head,

"You stupid girl, shut up! I said stop crying! Be quiet, it'll be over soon."

The other continues,

"Even though you screamed, no one's coming to save you. We're sixteen. We're the oldest among the ones who survived the virus. You damn group of brats can't take us on."

And yet the girl wouldn't stop yelling.

"Help me!"

"Don't do this!"

Then she shouts out someone's name. It was probably her friend's name. But nobody was coming. No one would come at all. It was as the boys had foretold; No one would be foolish enough to take on the sixteen year old boys in this world.

Because of what happened four years ago.

Everyone who was thirteen and older died from a virus and so those who were twelve back then are now sixteen.

Now within this world there was no humans stronger than those who are of age sixteen.

As the girl keeps on screaming, the boy swung hard at her face.

"Guh-"

Then the screams halts.

Blood was seeping from her mouth as it drip to the ground.

"You idiot, you smash her face. You were suppose to go easy."

"Oh oops, sorry."

The boys laugh mockingly.

Her face seized up with despair. She wouldn't shout anymore. She gave up. No one was going to save her.

The world fell to the virus and shortly after the children became vampire livestock. There was no help.

One of the boys grip onto the girl's leg.

Mika mutters as he watches,

"...Yuu-chan. Let's go. We should go..."

But then,

"Guuuuuuraaaah!"

A voice breaks out.

It was Yuu-chan's.

"Eh...?"

Looking back, he spots Yuu-chan picking up a stone from somewhere then rushes towards the boy.

"You got to be kidding me."

Mika scrambles to stop him. He doesn't make it in time.

Yuu-chan with all his might hurls the stone to the back of the boy who was holding the girl's leg.

"...Ye-owh!"

Although the sixteen year old was struck, he didn't fall. Still there had been some damage. He grips his back, crouching to the ground.

The other boy responded,

"Oi, you brat! What are you-" he's interrupted as Mika runs up and kicks him in the stomach.

"Guh-

In that moment as the boys are preoccupied over there, Yuu-chan tells the girl,

"You, run away!"

"Ah, oh."

"Hurry up and go!"

She then runs off.

However, they also have to escape, they're in the same situation.

Mika shouts.

"Don't look at them!"

"Mi-"

"Don't say our names either! Just run!"

The two tried to get away yet they were too late.

Yuu-chan was grab by the arm by the boy he hit with the stone. Pulling it.

The physical strength of the sixteen year old is powerful.

Yuu-chan's twelve year old physique doesn't stand a chance. He's fling against the wall of the alley.

"Ghh!"

Yuu-chan's voice is in agony.

And yet he's looking toward me,

"Run"

He mouths.

But where would I flee to? It's useless to escape. I know that well.

Here our world is small. There's no blue sky in this terribly constricted world underground.

By now his face had been seen. If Yuu-chan was caught then Mika as well as everyone's whereabouts would be found out. They'll know Akane and other children are from the same orphanage.

If they do then what will happen?

Just a while ago these boys were attacking a girl who was about twelve. Akane's eleven. She's easy on the eyes too. It's likely she would be rape as a warning.

Then what should I do?

What could I do?

Mika halts in his tracks as he begins to dwell over these thoughts.

The boy gripping Yuu-chan by the neck, presses him against the back alley's wall and said, "Oi brat, are you dumb? What were you thinking would happen when you opposed us?"

Yuu-chan scowling at him answers,

"You're the dumbass! Why should we humans be pit against another? Shouldn't we be beating up the vampires, they're the enemy aren't they!"

And yet, the two boys shared a glance and laughed as if they hardly knew what he was just saying.

"Whaa? What are you blabbering about? How would we take down the vampires?"

"It's the livestock that always gets beaten!"

"Hahaha, you dumbshit! Accept the fact. In one way or another the vampires creams the humans."

That's true.

Come what may humans can't best the likes of vampires.

Like pigs who can't kill humans.

Like cattle who can't kill them either.

We are livestock since we can't kill the vampires.

"You won't know if you don't try!"

Yuu-chan wields a fist.

The boy avoids it with ease and bashes Yuu-chan in the face.

"Guh"

Yuu-chan's head collides with the wall. The boy wasn't pulling his punches at all. He was beating Yuu-chan as though he didn't mind he may die. Upon this place here where humans killed humans, there's no adults who could carry out punishments.

So even if they kill us those guys wouldn't bear any retribution.

"Damn!"

Mika sprints off. He has to save Yuu-chan.

One of the boys smirking looked at him and said,

"Oh, what, you also feeling up for it?"

In one swoop Mika shorten the distance between him and the boy. He clench a fist, aiming at the boy's jaw and-

It hits!

Is what he thought at the same time the boy's fist seize a blow to Mika's cheek. The impact made Mika's neck swirl around. His head swaying, he loses his balance as he collapses just then for his body to be kick at even more.

"Guh..."

Mika is also slam into the wall.

Within a short while his field of vision goes in circles, rendering him unable to grasp the situation.

Hearing merely laughter.

The laughter of those boys.

He feels nauseous.

Was it because his head was teetering or did the fault lie with those who began this ugly fight with their own tomfoolery?

“...ka...”

“...”

“...ka...Mika! Are you okay!?”

It's Yuu-chan.

He turns his sight to where the voice is.

Yuu-chan looked at him with concern.

It seems somehow he ended up sitting down next to Yuu-chan.

Mika glares at him.

“Of course I'm not, jeez.”

Right as he responses, he's kick in the face again.

Yuu-chan is beaten too.

Now, this was ludicrous.

The anger of those boys who's sexual desires were thwarted was extreme.

The sexual desires of a livestock...that mere thought made me sick to my stomach again.

The boy holds Mika by the nape of his neck and lifts him up.

“Well not so cocky now, huh brat?”

Mika wasn't sure how to answer, he worries. If they apologize would they let them go?

Probably not.

Sooner or later we would've run into these boys again in this neighborhood.

If Akane was with us then they might tell us to hand her over. Or if they're low on food then we might have to hand ours over. Or say if they're in a bad mood, they'll beat us up, wouldn't they?

Among the sixteen years old group, the eldest, there were well-behave ones and the bad ones. However, there weren't that many clashes between them.

Everyone here is desperate to keep on living and so it wasn't a good thing to get into conflicts. But that also meant no one would come to your aid if you caught the eyes of a bad group.

We need to do something.

We need to somehow defend ourselves so we won't become slaves beneath the livestock.

Yuu-chan was still being kick at beside him.

The boy gripping Mika's collar then said,

"...You're liable for this interference, you'll have to do something for us. Oh that's right, among your group there's a girl too, isn't there?"

What should I do?

"We won't have to kill if you bring that girl here to us"

What the hell am I'm gonna do?

Just as he thinks that he-

"Hey, are you listen-"

Mika opened his mouth.

"....Shut up!"

" Hah!? What the hell did you say now?"

Mika staring dead at the boy, spoke once more,

"I said shut up. Did you really think you'll get away with this to begin with after what you all did to me?"

"Ahh? What the hell are you-"

But Mika goes on, interrupting him.

In a low, hush voice, so Yuu-chan doesn't overhear he continues,

"The vampire nobel, Lord Ferid Bathory, I'm his favorite. I can come and go as I please at his mansion. Doing such a thing like this, somehow it seems this was your plan all along. To defy the vampires, right?"

He said it. He advocated those vile things!

He revealed the name of his master.

"Aren't the vampires our enemy!?" Yuu-chan would yell out.

His words were the complete reverse of it.

The remarks of a true livestock.

Nevertheless the effect was incredible. The face of the boy who was gripping Mika by the neck, turns pale.

"...With your body, are you-"

"Shut your mouth! Shut it and be gone!"

And then the boy said fearfully,

"Ha, haha, what's with you. What was that about taking down the vampires? When you're the most traitorous of-"

"So what?"

Mika spoke, glaring at the boy.

"Really you guys get over it and accept the truth. Help won't come here anymore. There's no side of justice. But I must protect my family. And so I'll do whatever for their sake. Make no mistakes. The one who's greater here aren't the sixteen year old. It's vampires. And I have a shield with them now."

He slowly takes a hold of the boy's arm as he said,

"If you dare lay a hand on my family from now on. I'll kill you."

"....."

The boy then lets go of Mika's neck.

He takes a step back and tells the other boy,
"Arrgh, this is so boring, let's beat it."

Then the two drove off.

Once confirming those two were gone, Mika sat down on the ground. Yuu-chan was lying on his face having also fallen to the ground.

Considering how he was beaten...he couldn't be dead, could he!?

He feared but then-

"...everything hurts."

Yuu-chan moans as he said, somehow it seem he was still alive.

Mika smiles upon that as he looks over Yuu-chan's back, and declares,
"Now apologize, Yuu-chan."

Yuu-chan not getting up from where he remain, replied,
"I'm sorry."

"I wonder should I just let you off with a sorry."

"But they pissed me off!"

"Then get pissed at someone you can win against."

"Well, you got a point there but..."

Yuu-chan lifted himself up.

"Ow, ow, ow!" He goes on saying as he sits on the ground.

He's dead tired. Still he turns to me, his face worn out. That was also black and blue.

"Yuu-chan."

"Hm?"

"You're starting to look like a panda."

"Haha, you do too."

Mika touches his bruised cheek. It hurts as he press it. It'll probably swell to blue. Had Ferid Bathory preferred his face rather than the taste of his blood then this could be bad.

But Mika gazes at Yuu-chan and laughed.

"Though I guess they also did annoyed me."

"Right?"

"Well besides that...Yuu-chan had acted right all along. The girl they had assaulted was about the same age as Akane. Meaning she could likely also be attack. Though for protection if we also resist then they might show up or not."

Then Yuu-chan looking at me, says,
"Do you think those guys are onto to us now?"

For once, Yuu-chan looks like he has a brain.

Mika looks over at Yuu-chan.

"Nah, we're probably fine."

"How?"

"I told them we have supports from the vampires"

"Oh?"

"And then I said if they lay a hand on us, the vampires will kill them."

Yuu-chan laughed gleefully.

"What in the world, that's such an amazing lie you told!"

"..."

"Although who would have believe we're on good terms with those bloodsuckers.

"..."

Yuu-chan smiled as he said that.

Mika loved that smile of his.

No, Akane and the kids from the Hyakuya Orphanage did too, everyone was bound to love Yuu-chan's smile.

The world suddenly perish and all the adults dies. They're treated like livestock by the vampires. In this world where no future lies, they should beat up the vampires and build a human world here!

That foolish, ridiculous splendid dream Yuu-chan talks about with his smile was the children's emotional support.

I'll protect that even if I have to sell my blood, flesh, and body for it. That's nothing.

"Well let's go home already. If we're late getting back then the children will worry."

Mika said as he gets up.

"When Akane see our faces, she won't stop nagging will she?"

Yuu-chan voices out, frowning.

"It's your fault."

"Huh? You're saying that again!?"

"Had you just hurl the rock at his head in the first place with one blow, you would have won!"

"If I did, he would have die!"

"You have to or they'll get you! Isn't this that kind of world now?"

"But, we're humans aren't we?"

Yuu-chan said though it seems for a brief moment that mere thought before wrecked him.

Seeing that expression, Mika nodded.

"Yeah"

"And the vampires are our enemy, right?"

"Uh huh"

"So then I guess it can't be helped that humans competes among each other."

"That's right."

But here humans killed humans.

These two have seen it a lot.

They seen the groups of boys and girls in the neighborhood killing each other over trivial things while they struggled for food.

Yuu-chan looked at me with a weary face and said,

"...The shouldn't we have kill that girl who was almost raped and steal her food?

Mika commented back with,

"Are you saying that seriously?"

"No I'm not"

"Then were you insisting your stand of being right?

"Yup"

Being told like that, Mika laughs and said,

"Alright, then you were right."

"See?"

"Geez."

The two laughed. Although they laughed they both knew that it won't change the darkness in this world. But even so as long as Yuu-chan is here, Mika can smile for sure.

Though it seemed Yuu-chan can't walk on his own. He might have injured his leg.

"You could lean on my shoulder?"

"Don't need it."

"You clearly do though."

Mika said as he lent him his shoulder.

And so the two slowly walked.

While on the way back home, Yuu-chan spoke once more,

"Mika."

"Yea?"

"....I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"It's because of me you got hurt."

But that's wrong, it wasn't Yuu-chan fault. It's this world that takes to blame. Yuu-chan was only doing what's right.

Mika looks at Yuu-chan with a mischief expression and said,

"I won't forgive you"

"Eeeeh?"

"Just kidding. Oh, then if I make a mistake, you also have to forgive me with a smile."

"What for? I'll always forgive you"

"Right, but unlike you, I don't make mistakes"

"Says you"

Yuu-chan quips while laughing.

They soon arrive home.

Even though their home, supplied by the vampires, seems like a filthy deserted building. All the children from Hyakuya Orphanage live together here.

The children were outside the building running around, enjoying themselves.

As one of them recognize them, they call out Yuu-chan and Mika's name. Soon the other kids notices them. They smile at first but as they note the beaten-up form of the two, they then look to be on the verge of tears.

"....."

How in the world could he protect these children from this cruel world?

That was all Mika kept thinking of.

In a world where a hero of justice won't come anymore. In a world where there's no faith at all in the love of God. Just what could he do to protect this family?

This was always running through his thoughts.

That's why he kissed up to Ferid Bathory.

Could there somehow be a path? Could there be a light?

Is what he reasons with when he presented himself to that vampire.

I don't know whether it was right.

But, this had to be done to get on by.

Akane and the children gather around them. Among the children, many are crying too much with anxiety. Stroking their heads, Mika looks to Yuu-chan.

Yuu-chan notices, casting an eye in his direction. The children are suspicious but he smiles awkwardly anyways.

Surely he's thinking the same thing.

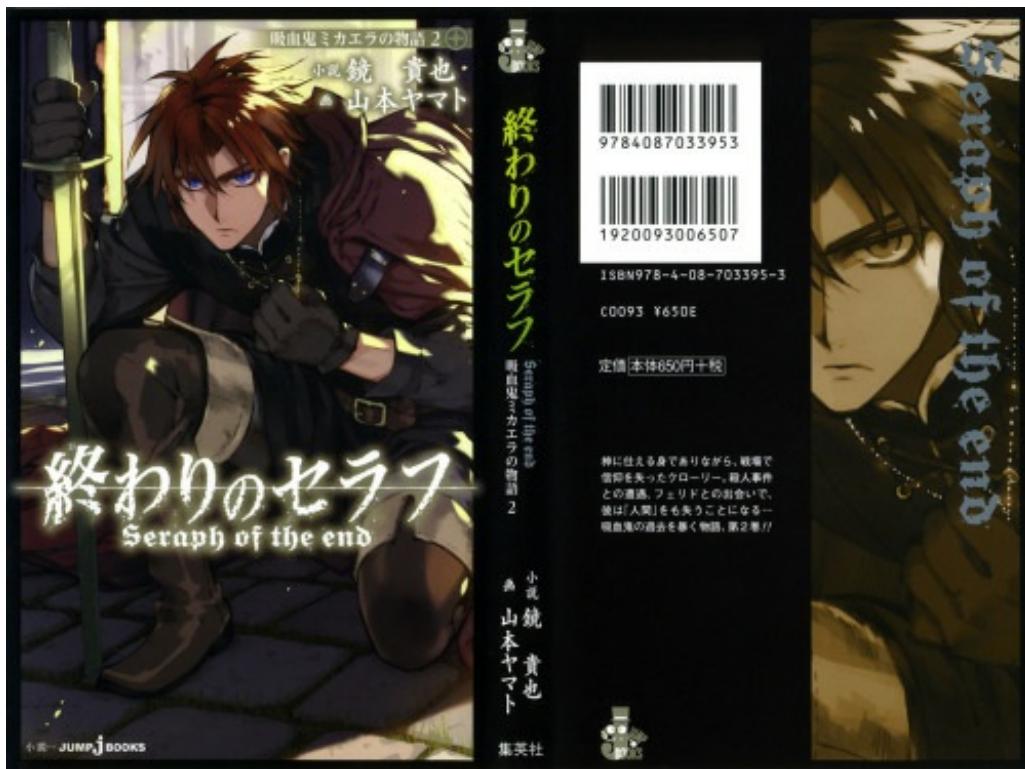
In this damn world how can we protect our family?

If one could end up dead one way or another by a mistake in an instant in this rough place, how then could we protect our family's smiles?

Mika was always thinking of that.

CHILLY TERRITORY

 chilly-territory.tumblr.com/post/144113966040/s...eraph-of-the-end-the-story-of-vampire-michaela



Most of Chapter 1, save for this part, is being translated by [amethystcra](#), while I'm starting on everything Crowley-related.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 1 (closing part) (volume 2, pages 33-42)

♦♦♦

Tap, tap... The point of a pen rustled across the parchment lightly as Ferid Bathory, seated in his private study, scribbled something on it.

The parchment he was imprinting the ink into, was spread on top of a big desk that was made by a skillful craftsman 200 years prior. Having drawn lines running right and left, Ferid took a step back to admire his handiwork.

"Hmmm, still a little off." With that, he tore up the parchment.

Taking another sheet and spreading it on top of the desk, he dipped the nib of the pen into the ink, striving to draw a little slower this time, and with a more delicate touch. Then, perhaps, he would succeed in reproducing the original a little closer to the ideal and with a nice feel.

"..."

He was absorbed in drawing when he heard a knock on the door followed by a voice, "Can I come in?"

The voice belonged to Crowley Eusford.

"I'm busy right now," Ferid responded.

Crowley, however, ignored his reply and came in anyway.

What a boorish man. Those who bothered artists during their creative time were to be beheaded without a moment's delay, as far as Ferid was concerned. But then again, vampires did not die from being beheaded.

"What are you doing?" Crowley came asking.

Holding up his pen, Ferid answered, "There is something I've been hiding from you until now... actually, I dreamed of becoming a painter."

Crowley picked up several crumpled parchment sheets, littering the floor. "A painter?"

"Yup."

"And this is a picture, in your opinion?"

"Yes, it obviously is?"

"It looks like a map to me though."

"And that is why I hate those who have no understanding of art. Alright then, I should continue."

With that, Ferid put the pen to the parchment again, running it across the surface slowly, lightly and carefully. Maybe this attempt would turn out successful after all.

Crowley walked up, standing close to him, and peered down at his work. "I knew it, it's totally a map."

"Can you not peek? I'm the type who can't draw when I'm being watched. I may not look it, but I'm rather shy."

"Yeah, yeah. So, this is a map of this underground city, Sanguinem, I take it. Why are you suddenly drawing maps, pray tell?"

Never stopping drawing his map, Ferid answered, "Well, I plan to let children who want to escape to the outside find this."

"Oh."

"And then, just when those children's eyes sparkle as they think they've successfully escaped, I will ambush them near the exit and devour them in a highly artistic way."

"...Whoa, what the hell. Your terrible tastes never change, huh."

"How awful of you to call my tastes terrible. That is the precise reason why those who cannot understand the beauty of art are so troublesome to deal with," Ferid went on, connecting dots and lines, lines and dots, peppering the parchment, one after another.

That kind of work required diligence and accuracy. If a single line was off even by a little, the entire piece would lose its harmonic beauty.

Crowley spoke up again. "To begin with, there are plenty of this city's maps around already. Why do you need to draw one yourself?"

"Oh, I need to. It's a lot more amusing if I did everything myself," Ferid replied.

Crowley, however, only made a face that said he didn't understand. Of course, it wasn't like Ferid didn't know the feeling himself. Due to living for too long, vampires lost sight of how that emotion itself, "amusing", was supposed to feel.

What vampires did have was only lust for blood. Living an eternal, boring, and meaningless life while embracing despair was all that was left to them.

"If drawing can elevate the boredom, maybe I should try it, too," Crowley commented.

"Want to start with drawing my portrait?"

"No way."

"Then what do you want to try drawing? Does the little pervert Crowley-kun want to draw a girl in the nude?"

Needless to say, that was also a joke. Vampires had no desire for the opposite sex either.

Blood. The only desire they had was for blood.

Meanwhile, Ferid finished drawing his map. Lifting the pen away from the parchment so that the ink didn't accidentally end up dripping on it, Ferid took a step back. Folding his arms, he gazed at the map. "...Hmm."

This time, the map turned out quite decent, he concluded. Good enough to use for that plan of his.

"You were having so much fun drawing that map... it's almost hard to believe that you're a vampire," Crowley remarked, looking at Ferid wonderingly.

But Ferid ignored him, all of his attention focused on his map only. This map had to be free of any errors or flaws. Drawing it, and having it stolen by Mikaela was all part of a grand-scale project that had been put in motion more than 10 years ago. The gratification to be gained the moment that meticulous, grand and thoroughly thought-out plan would reach its completion would be quite big.

"Crowley-kun."

"Mm?"

"What do you think of this map?"

"Can you be more specific? From what perspective do you want me to answer that question?"

"From the beauty perspective."

"Beauty, huh."

Crowley focused his attention on the map now, as well. Folding his arms across his chest and lightly stroking his chin with a finger, he suddenly showed a mischievous smile, like he thought up of something. "Well, I think I'll take a picture of a naked woman over this."

A naked woman was better, he said.

After Ferid took his time to laugh at that, he knocked down a glass that was found on his desk. The glass that was filled with lifeblood of a 12 year old boy. As the glass toppled, the map Ferid put so much effort in drawing got stained with it. The blood soaked the parchment, ruining it in no time at all.

And instantly, Crowley's throat worked, making a gulping motion at the sight of the blood, letting Ferid know that the craving for blood had been sparked in Crowley with ease.

"Hah, I knew it, you are a pervert, Crowley-kun."

"How mean. I'm just hungry, is all. And speaking of, that's what I came here to say."

"To say that I'm a pervert?"

"No. Yesterday's night, we were going to talk about the past while drinking blood in your mansion, remember?"

"Oh."

Crowley grimaced, exasperated. "Don't pretend this is the first time you hear this. You proposed it yourself. Besides, I came here all the way from Nagoya because you called, and I want you to tell me already for what business exactly. Or maybe I should just go back?"

"No."

"Then tell me what business you called me here for, quickly."

"Hahaha," Ferid laughed and put down the pen.

It looked like he would have to put off drawing his map until tomorrow or even later. Still, he needed to finish it soon. After all, it was almost time to put his next plan into motion.

To vampires, the perception of passing time was dulled, and they tended to be forgetful— Ah, right. The time to make

good on his promise to “that human” was near.

But right now...

“Fine then. Let us hear the rest of the story about how you became a vampire, while enjoying some blood,” Ferid said.

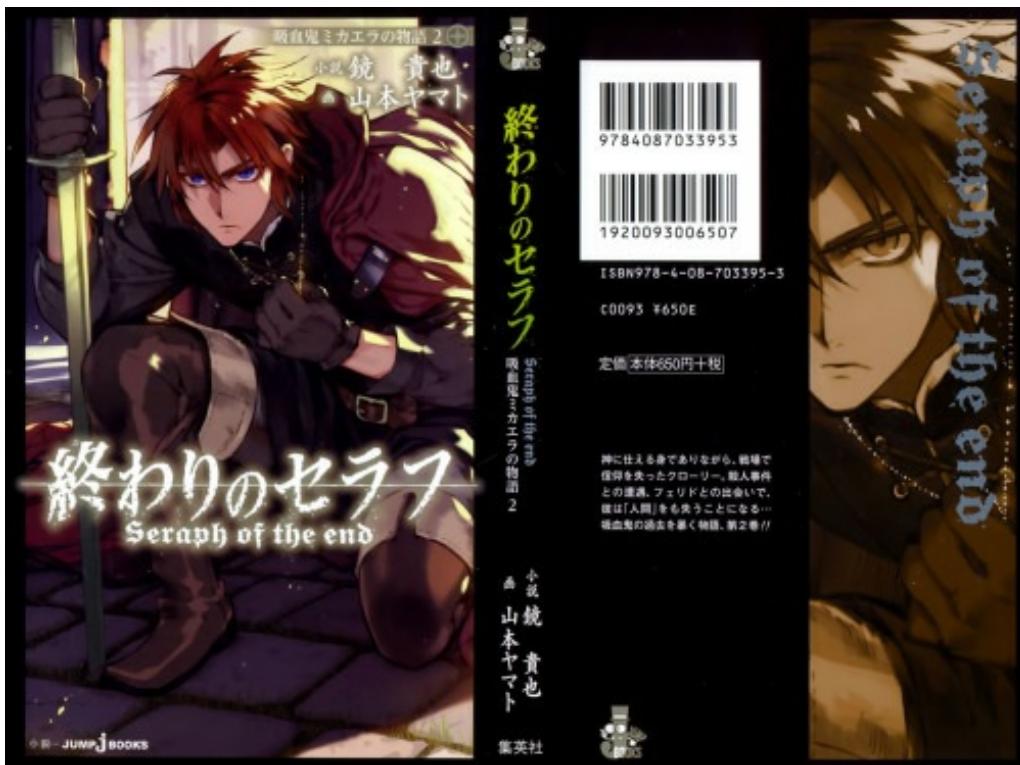
The story about Crowley Eusford’s past. The story that also had to do with Ferid’s map.

The story about the name “Michaela”. The story about the grand plan spanning for over a millennium that the man who turned Ferid into a vampire talked about.

T/N: The chapter is titled “The Map of the Future”, so Ferid’s map motif ties in that.

CHILLY TERRITORY

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Back to the Middle Ages.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 2 (volume 2, pages 43-62)

Virtuous People, Scoundrels, and...

Europe of the 13th century was a world where death was a lot closer to every human than it is now. When someone died, profound grief a death is accompanied with nowadays could hardly be expected.

But still, on that day, everybody cried, because someone they all loved, the man, essential to the Templar Knights, who was to shoulder the future of the Order, died.

Gilbert Chartres died.

And not just died, but was murdered in the Templar Knights' HQ in a highly bizarre way, and the news struck fear and sorrow in the hearts of the town residents.

“...”

Crowley was in his house, rocking in the loudly complaining chair and waiting, as time ticked away.

He didn't attend the funeral service. The fact must have caused tremendous indignation among those who did. Everybody adored Crowley, after all, so it was only to be expected. Crowley was a flawless man. A man who kept believing in God no matter what despair he laid his eyes upon.

It was men like him that were loved by God, Crowley thought. No, should have been loved by God.

Except in the end, Gilbert was killed. God didn't see what kind of man Gilbert was, didn't watch him.

Crowley gently touched the cross on his chest, hanging from his neck, and whispered barely audibly, "...If You don't love Gilbert, then who do you love?"

Just then a knock on the door came.

Today, the aristocrat named Ferid Bathory was supposed to visit. He appeared to hold clues that could lead them to Gilbert's murderer. Except he promised to come before noon.

"It's almost evening already," Crowley remarked with a wry smile.

The place of their destination lay a whole day and night away by carriage, so they were supposed to depart as early as possible.

"You're late, Ferid-kun. With you being that late, we probably can't depart today."

With that, Crowley opened the door.

It was raining outside. Heavily so. With the weather being this bad, Gilbert's funerals ran into a lot of trouble, no doubt. God wouldn't even grand the sun on the day of His pious believer's funerals.

"..."

The one standing at his doorstep wasn't Ferid, however. It was a man of large build and with a rich mustache.

Crowley knew him. Roy Rouland was the man's name, and he was Crowley's comrade in arms, a participant of the Crusade and one of the Templars Crowley went through hell together with.

Back at that last battlefield, he was among the group Gilbert led that managed to escape to Damietta. Since then, his position among the Order had been secured as one of the members of Gilbert's faction. But well, that was yet another thing that had passed into nothingness now, with Gilbert's passing away.

Crowley simply looked at his guest, while Roy glared at Crowley, saying in no uncertain terms, "Crowley Eusford. Why are you still here."

"...You're drenched to the skin, Roy."

"Answer me! Why didn't you come to Gilbert's funerals?!" Roy yelled. He looked to be terribly angry.

And Crowley knew how he felt. Why he didn't come to the funerals of his old comrade, huh.

Crowley gave Roy an answer. "I have no right to be there. I've distanced myself from the Knights Temp—"

Roy interrupted him mid-sentence. "Me and the other knight only survived thanks to you. And all our comrades are waiting for you to return!"

"..."

"Well, late Gilbert was the one who waited for you the most. He also believed that you must be the next Master of the Order," Roy went on.

So it looked like now that Gilbert was dead, he came looking for the person set up as the next candidate.

Crowley's eyes narrowed. "Hah. Is this a politics talk, Roy?" he asked.

Roy, though, stepped inside with a look of fury, raising his fist. "Don't screw with me, Crowley!"

He threw a punch at Crowley with all his strength. Crowley stopped his fist.

Roy roared, "I don't care about politics! Our comrade is dead! Don't you feel anything?!"

Oh, Crowley felt alright. And that was the reason why he didn't go to the funerals. If he had, there could be no doubt that the Templars, looking for the next Gilbert, would discover him, and his name would come up the same instance. A political fight would break out, and searching for Gilbert's murderer would take a backseat to it.

That was why Crowley could not attend Gilbert's funerals.

"Answer me, Crowley! Why didn't you come to the funerals?!" Roy drew the sword strapped to his hip.

At that, a voice squalled from somewhere behind Roy. "P-Please wait, Roy-sama!"

It belonged to Jose, the squire assigned to Crowley. Apparently, he accompanied Roy here.

Jose tried to pin down Roy's arm, but Roy kicked him flying. Roy was a big man, and his kick packed a lot of force, sending Jose flying across the room and through the door.

Roy turned to Crowley, sword raised. Crowley only gazed up at its tip.

"Aren't you taking the farce too far, Roy?"

"You're the one who's playing a farce here, Crowley," Roy replied. "Come to your senses already. That disastrous Crusade is over. And you gotta move on!"

With that, he swung his sword in a downward arc. The speed of the swing was no joke. So he was serious then.

Crowley jumped back, knocking over the chair in the process. The direction he jumped in was where the table was, with his sword leaned against it. The next instance, he grabbed the sword and unsheathed it.

It was probable that Roy was stronger now than he used to be. After all, he kept training and improving his swordplay even now. Crowley was aware of the fact. Roy wasn't a man of politics.

But still, as of yet...

"...I'm still stronger."

With that, Crowley raised his sword and clashed his blade against Roy's. Roy was probably heavier and more muscular than Crowley, but the force behind Crowley's blade still won. A clatter of metal on metal was followed by the sound of Roy's sword breaking. Crowley struck it in the way so that it would. The broken-off tip, spinning wildly, lodged into the ceiling.

But Crowley didn't stop his attack. Letting his sword press into Roy's neck driven by the momentum, he swept Roy's legs from under him, knocking him down to the floor.

"...Ugh", Roy groaned.

Looking down on the fallen man, Crowley ordered coldly, "Get lost."

Roy glared at him, and spoke up. "...Just what are you running away from, Crowley Eusford?"

"I'm not ru—"

But again, Roy didn't let him finish, continuing his speech. "Gilbert said that you've started losing God. No one says it out loud, but all those who returned from that war are more or less the same way. That war was just too horrible. It's impossible to believe that God watched over us back there. But still, me and you survived that war. Survived the hell that was nigh impossible to survive. Isn't that divine providence?"

Providence. Was it though? If God's hand had guided them in any way, would they have had to go through such

experiences in the first place, Crowley wondered as he recalled what happened in that war.

How he only killed, only slaughtered the enemies meaninglessly, and how he had to watch his allies getting slaughtered in turn. But the worst of all was the face of the monster that appeared at the end. No, it may have been a hallucination. The hallucination that he, being weak-hearted as he was, conjured for himself when the despair from seeing Victor and the rest of his comrades getting killed just when they thought they had managed to survive got too much for him to bear.

But even if the monster was only a figment of his imagination, after seeing it, he couldn't bring himself to believe in God's love anymore.

No divine providence could be found anywhere. At least, not for him.

No, not just for him...

"....Even Gilbert got killed in the end. Are you going to say that it was providence, too?"

"Gilbert wanted you to return," Roy said. "The Knights Templar need you. And that is a divine revelation, I'm sure. For you to come to your senses and take notice of God's will again..."

Hearing that, Crowley frowned, his words coming out rougher and ruder than before. "Don't screw with me, Roy. Are you saying that Gilbert died for my sake?"

"Listen, Crowley. There is a reason for everything, and we all let live in accordance with God's—"

"Then I don't need such a God. Gilbert was a man worth far more than me. And Victor, too, and Gustavo... and Commander Alfred... "

Roy caught hold of Crowley's hand at that. "Come back to us, Crowley. The Lord's side is where you belong."

Crowley gazed at Roy for a few moments before sighing, "Nonsense," and lowering the blade. Picking up the scabbard lying on the floor, he sheathed the sword.

He couldn't bring himself to serve a God that killed Victor and Gilbert any longer.

Getting up from the floor, Roy didn't give up, "Crowley. I feel the same way. Ever since that war, not a day goes by without me wondering why such a useless, worthless man like me disgracefully survived."

"..."

"The Commander was a great man. Victor was a nice guy. Gustavo had a bit of a mean streak about him, but he didn't deserve to die. And Gilbert held steadfast while waiting for you to return some day."

"..."

"But in the end, they all died. And we're still alive. Think about the meaning of this. God is by our side. Watching us from upclose."

Crowley didn't think He was.

"Watching you."

No, Crowley couldn't bring himself to believe He was, at all.

"It's time for you to move on. Don't lend your ear to the Devil's whispers, Crowley, and just push straight forward."

The Devil... Hearing that word triggered Crowley's memory again, of that battlefield where God didn't show Himself to them no matter how much he wished for Him to, only a monster appeared in His stead.

The monster that sucked human blood.

And even Gilbert that had survived the worst of it and was supposed to keep living died from getting all of his blood

drawn out. Something bad was afoot. Something very bad.

Without his realizing, Crowley's hand touched the cross hanging from his neck. That rosary was what was left of Commander Alfred.

"You haven't lost God yet. You just strayed from the path a l—" Roy started.

"Please just go, Roy. I have no intention of returning to the Order."

"Everybody is waiting for the hero to return."

"There is no hero. And no God either."

"..."

If an Inquisitor heard that utterance, execution would be what Crowley would likely have to face. But Roy only kept gazing at Crowley as he reiterated, "...In any case, Gilbert will be laid to rest very soon. The place is the church's inner cemetery. I'll attend. And I'm sure Gilbert would be glad if you—"

"I won't go."

"Then pray at least. Pray for late Gilbert."

With that, Roy returned his broken sword to its sheath and exited the house. "Let's go, Jose. Crowley will come to the cemetery."

"U-Um... Crowley-sama..." Jose looked between the two knights, in perplexity at Roy and imploringly at Crowley. The boy was already soaked to the bone.

Crowley sighed. "It's Gilbert's burial service. You should attend it."

"Then, let us go together, Crowley-sama."

"Hurry up and go. This is an order."

"Uh..." For a while Jose, wearing a troubled expression on his face, stared at Crowley, then ran off.

Crowley watched Jose's retreating form.

It was still daytime, yet it was dark as ever outside. The heavy downpour showed no signs of abating.

Crowley rightened the chair that fell down to the floor earlier, and sat down on it again. Watching the rain outside the door with grim intensity, he whispered, "If You do exist, answer me: did you love Gilbert?"

God didn't answer.

"Did you call him to Your side because You love him?"

No reply from God came.

"Or did You pay him no heed at all? A knight that loved You died. Make the rain stop for him, at least."

But God didn't grant even that wish.

That sealed it: God didn't exist after all. At least not anywhere near Crowley.

Instead, there existed—

"..."Thou shall not test God's love", Crowley-kun."

—not God, but an exceedingly frivolous man, singsonging the words like he was reciting poetry as he answered Crowley from the darkness of the rain where no sun shone.

The deviously beautiful man materialized at the other side of the open door. The noble with long silver hair, supple build and a bewitching smile playing on his lips, Ferid Bathory.

Coming into the house, the first thing he uttered was something as ridiculous as, "Come on, come on, what are you doing sitting around and dillydallying? It's already time for us to depart, you know?" even though it was a few hours past the time when they were supposed to meet up.

Exasperated, Crowley replied, "You're the one who's late."

"Well, maybe a little. The rain was awful, you see."

"What a poor excuse."

"And I only just woke up."

"That has nothing to do with the rain, don't you think?"

"Ah, right you are," Ferid gave a flippant laugh.

Honestly, what a frivolous slippery man. And God let this man live, yet killed Gilbert.

If that was how it worked, there was no meaning in observing the strict discipline of the Knights Templar and serving such a God.

Crowley let out a sigh, and a bitter smile curved his lips. "Good gracious, all sorts of things go insane when you're around."

"Meaning?"

"Virtuous people die, while scoundrels have their way."

"Naturally, I qualify as a virtuous person, right?"

"Hah," Crowley snorted involuntarily.

Ferid chuckled at that, too. "You're talking about late Gilbert, aren't you?"

"Yeah."

"Well, God loves virtuous people. No matter how the likes of me scream and shout, begging to die, Our Lord refuses to let us, as if saying, "Flippant people like you are forbidden from coming here"."

"Haha, that makes you immortal, eh."

"Maybe. Makes you jealous, doesn't it?" Ferid cracked a ridiculous joke and laughed.

Watching that bewitching innocent smile, Crowley thought that maybe he was jealous of Ferid, if only a little. Ferid had no morals or piety, but for that precise reason he seemed to be free of the sorrows they caused. Just living the way he pleased. Drinking wine, sleeping with women and not hesitating to drown himself in immorality and corruption. Really, he was the devil of a man leading humans astray from the path of God.

"Ah, you have jealousy written all over your face. Then, do you want to become like me?" Ferid asked, watching Crowley with attention.

"Never."

"Come on, no need to be shy. You want to become my comrade, no? Ah, by the way, if you do become that, you will be hated by God. But you will be able to have all the women and meat you could possibly want, every day."

That was truly the Devil's whispers, then and there. Indeed, if he continued to associate with Ferid, God would surely hate him.

With a chuckle, Crowley replied, "Right now, I'm not interested in wine or women. All I want is to find whoever is responsible for the murders."

That was precisely why he didn't attend Gilbert's funerals today, after all, and why he was about to go to a far away village housing the chasers' community. All in order to find clues as to where the silver needle left in the neck of the prostitute victim was made. Except Ferid had apparently already figured out whose work it might have been. In these parts, only 5 masters, who could possibly make a small needle into such a regular-shaped cylinder with an orifice that tiny, could be found.

Asking one of them revealed that the needle was the work of a master chaser named Haeberle. For that reason, today they were going to head to where that master lived, but...

"If we depart now, we'll arrive in the dead of night," Crowley noted.

"Then we just need to ride slow," Ferid replied. "I have wine and food prepared in my carriage. Are you done with your preparations? You may not be back for quite a while, you know?"

When told that, Crowley shifted his gaze to what lied outside the door that was left wide open. There, the inelaborate practice grounds sprawled. The children of nobility came here every day, seeking Crowley's lessons, but this morning, Crowley informed his students that there would be no lessons for a while due to him going on a trip. Knowing about Gilbert's death, everyone accepted the announcement without a fuss.

Well, there were a few students that said that they would come here every day to practice while they waited for him to return.

In any case...

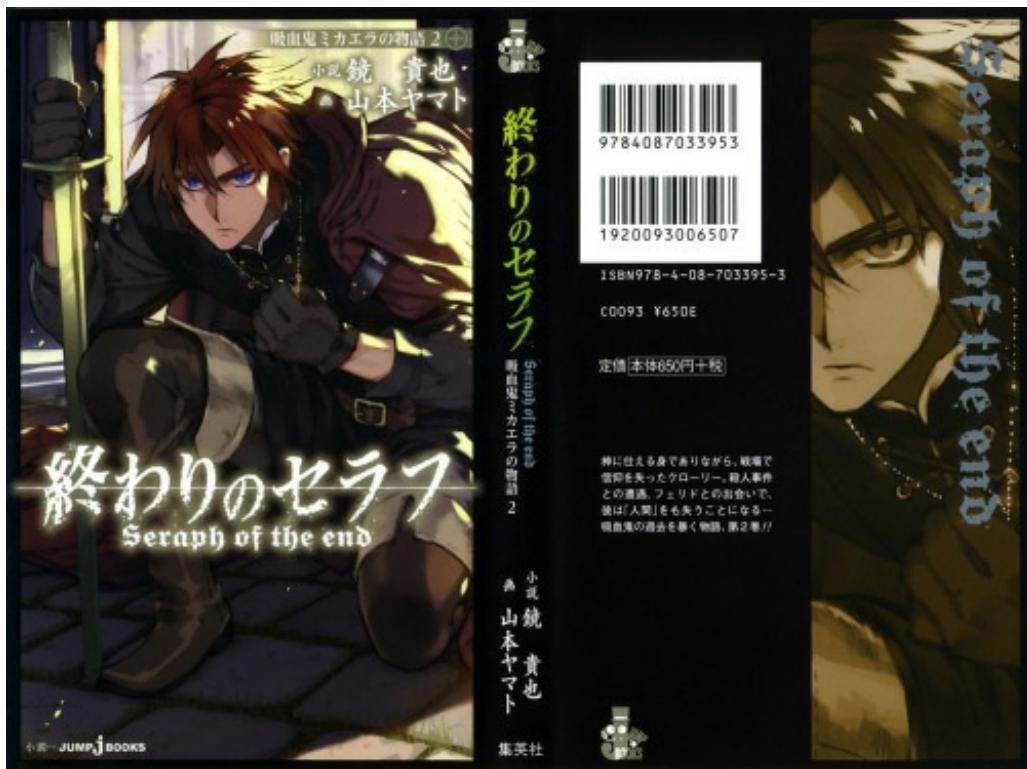
"Yes, I'm done. I'm prepared not to be back until I catch Gilbert's murderer," Crowley said, picking up the bag left in the entryway with his things that should last him a few days and the sword.

"Let's go. Time to hunt down a bloodsucker."

With that, the two departed.

CHILLY TERRITORY

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A world of hurt ahead, and it's only the beginning.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 3 (part 1/5) (volume 2, pages 63-104)

In Regards to Your Justice

Crowley gazed at the scenery outside the small window from inside the rocking carriage.

The village that housed the chaser workshop was two days away from the town. The downpour continued all the while the carriage rolled along the road. The trip had taken longer because on unpaved stretches of the road the wheels stuck in the mud every now and then, but finally...

"We're almost there," Crowley murmured.

He knew that the village must have been near by just how well maintained the road became. It meant the village saw a decent amount of traffic, with many people coming and going.

The rain had stopped at the dawn break. The thick clouds cleared, and strong light began to shine on the world.

Shifting his gaze from the window to the interior of the carriage, Crowley called, "Ferid-kun."

"..." Ferid didn't stir.

Yesterday's night, the two of them drank plenty of wine. Ferid drained a small cask he had on him for "personal use" all by himself. Maybe waking up was too much to ask of him right now.

"Ferid-kun. We're almost there."

“...”

“Are you asleep?”

At that, Ferid finally answered, still keeping his eyes closed. “...No, not in the least. I cannot sleep.”

“Oh really. Your voice sounds very sleepy though.”

Ferid cracked an eye open moodily to glance at Crowley. “Are you not drunk yourself?”

“Not from so little, no.”

“What a monster,” Ferid smiled faintly, then pointed at the brightly illuminated window. “Mind shutting the window? I hate the sun, you see.”

“Now that the rain has stopped, it’s a very nice and pleasant morning out there.”

“Ewww,” Ferid grimaced in displeasure.

Crowley looked out the window again; the village was in sight now and getting closer. They were almost there.

“In any case, wake up. End of journey.”

“I hate mornings,” Ferid bemoaned, stroking a ring-shaped accessory on his hand.

Just then, the servant, driving the carriage, shouted loudly, “Ferid-sama!”

“Yeees~? Are we there?”

“Y-Yes, sir! But, but... What on earth...?!”

The driver’s voice was clearly not his normal. It was the voice of someone frightened by something. Crowley stood up and opened the door despite the carriage still moving at full speed.

“Be careful not to fall out,” Ferid warned, but Crowley ignored him, grabbing onto the upper part of the door and leaning out of it from the waist up.

The weather really was very nice. Perfect for strolling and exploring. The sky was cloudless, and sunlight had already started drying the puddles on the road that led to the small settlement. An idyllic scene - if not for 4 dead bodies ahead. They were men dressed in work clothes, likely workers from the chaser workshop.

Crowley frowned, “Well, I’ll be damned, Ferid-kun.”

“We got beaten to the punch, I take it?” a response came from the depths of the carriage.

“Eh...?” Crowley had to draw himself back into the carriage at that.

Ferid was sitting with his eyes still closed, looking dizzy and dazzled by the sun, but Crowley ignored his state to shout, “You knew?!?”

“That is what I would do myself if I were in the killer’s place. The moment I realized that evidence had been left, I would make a move to hide my tracks.”

Taking out the silver needle from his breast pocket, Ferid twirled it between his fingers. Despite the situation, he still looked ready to fall asleep any moment.

“Hey, wake up already. Our only lead has just vanished.”

“So what? It is all good anyway.”

“No, it’s not!”

“Geez, you are so loud in the morning.”

With this, Ferid finally opened his eyes. Listlessly fingering the ring on his hand again, he glanced in the direction of the open door. “Whooa, that sunlight is something else. I think I have a problem then,” he muttered with a hint of trepidation in his voice. “My sunlight protection ring doesn’t seem to be working properly. I must fix it later...”

“Enough of your chitchat, Ferid-kun, you, too, gotta take a look outs—”

"Yes, yes, I will. Khinueh," Ferid ordered to the driver. "Stop the carriage. We will walk from here."

Avoiding the dead bodies lying in the middle of the road, the carriage came to a stop. Crowley grabbed the sword lying on the edge of the seat and jumped off the same instance, running towards the corpses.

All the bodies had cut wounds on their backs, apparently left by a sword. In other words, the victims were trying to run away when they were cut down from behind. There were 4 dead bodies in total. All of them had slash wounds on their backs. The crisscrossing cuts were neat, which indicated that whoever inflicted them was decently skilled with the sword.

Just then, Ferid finally deigned to come out of the carriage. Unsteady on his feet, he approached. Blinking his eyes owlishly, he looked completely dizzy from the sun.

"Listen, Crowley-kun. Can we investigate this in the evening? I just cannot be up and about in the morning, I'm afraid."

"But if we drag our feet, the killer will escape."

"They have already escaped."

"How do you know?"

Looking down at Crowley with a tired face, Ferid answered his question, "Because the village is too quiet. As far as I know, the workshop here consists of more 40 craftsmen. But where are all the sounds then?"

Indeed, it was too quiet around. The only sounds Crowley could hear were whistling of the wind, rustling of leaves on trees and buzzing of insects.

"...All of them were killed...?" Crowley ventured, and Ferid only shrugged his shoulders with a look that said "what else could it be".

"Yes, probably. So the next question is, how long ago were they killed? Well, we are talking about a mass murder here. If any witnesses had been left, or any visitors with an appointment had come here before us, we would have found some kind of an uproar, no doubt. But we have not. That is, not that much time has passed yet since the massacre, and we have discovered it first. Still, it does not mean that the murder took place a short while ago. This much is clear from the corpses. The victims had their backs cut up, yet there is no trace of blood on the ground. Why, do you think? Because the blood has been washed away by the rain. That is, they had been killed before the rain stopped. And when did the rain stop, Khinueh?" Ferid asked.

"About 3 hours ago, sir," the driver answered.

"I see. Then, seeing that all the blood has been completely washed away, I would say they were killed about 6 hours ago."

"That is, late at night yesterday's night?" Crowley verified.

"Yes. Generally speaking, one would not go attacking a community of 40 people in the broad daylight after all. Alright then, I'm done. Now, you should see for yourself that we will not catch the culprit even if we rush, so let us take a nice sleep during the day and investigate ni~ce and slo~w afterwards?" Ferid didn't give up.

He appeared to have learned all of this just from a glance at the crime scene. It was the right decision to bring this man with him then, Crowley thought. This man would lead him to Gilbert's murderer, he was sure. However...

"Ferid-kun."

"Mm?"

"If the murder took place yesterday's night, it means we would have caught up to the killer if only you hadn't been late on the day of the departure, no?"

"Maybe so."

"Be punctual, will you."

"If it were not for me, you would not even come to this village in the first place though."

Well, he had a point.

"Besides," Ferid continued, "I would not want the friend I finally made to get killed."

"Wait, so you knew this would happen and deliberately didn't let me meet the culprit?"

But Ferid only chuckled.

"I didn't ask you to protect me in such a fashion," Crowley growled. "If only I met the killer—"

"What would you do then? What if they are someone you cannot win against? Would you still want to run into them, consequences be damned? Are you fine with being killed yourself, then?"

"I..."

"I have no intention to assist you in suicide. If you want to die, there are many easier ways, without resorting to such an elaborate setup. You could drink yourself dead on wine, for instance."

"It's not like I want to die."

But Ferid didn't let him speak, pointing to the dead bodies instead. "...I believe you are more knowledgeable about matters of the sword than I am. The cuts on the victims. Were they all inflicted by the same person, in your opinion?"

That prompted Crowley to take a closer look at the wounds left on the 4 bodies and compare them for the first time. And when he did, he discovered that the wounds weren't quite the same. They may have had the possibility of there being several culprits on their hands then. Moreover, it meant the killers had been armed and were skilled swordsmen.

But that should have been fairly obvious even without thinking long and hard. After all, the culprits attacked a village of 40 people and killed all of them. It was not a crime a lone person could commit. Which, in turn, meant...

"...It's not the monster from the war then."

That monster could kill everyone perfectly on his own. And he wouldn't use a sword for it.

Observing Crowley, Ferid smiled. "Oh? I seem to recall that you were sure it was only your hallucination?"

"And I still think so. It would be a disaster if monsters like that actually existed."

"Maybe they do exist," Ferid remarked cheerfully.

Looking at him, Crowley said, "Ferid-kun."

"Mn~?"

"Just how far are you able to foresee things?"

But as expected, Ferid didn't give him an answer, just continuing to grin.

"You were late on purpose, right? Making sure that I wouldn't run into the group of the armed murderers."

"I just overslept though."

"I want proper answers. In truth, you already know who the killers are, don't you?"

That inquiry elicited another grin from Ferid. "No, no. You are selling me too high. Are you mistaking me for a god, perhaps? There are things that even I do not know."

"Are you telling the truth?"

"Yes, the truth and only the truth. But well, I have a rough idea of who killed Gilbert-kun."

"Wha?! Who was it?!" Crowley shouted, demanding to know.

But at that Ferid turned his back to him, shifting his gaze to the still and silent village ahead. "But then again, you cannot arrest anyone on assumptions and insight alone. Having proof is a must. That is why we came here. Well then, if you do not want to wait until dusk, can we go investigate the village already? As I said, I personally hate sunlight. I'm a night dweller, you see."

"You just love night amusements, is all, I bet."

"Fufufu." Ferid started walking, chuckling all the while.

Following him Crowley asked, "Look, tell me the killer's name at least."

"If I said it was me, what would you do?" Ferid grinned.

"I have neither energy nor desire to entertain your jokes under these circumstances."

"Hahaha."

The two entered the village.

The chasers' village made a truly terrifying sight. Every house had corpses of chasers, their wives and their boy apprentices dangling upside down.

"...This is horrible."

Choosing a house, Crowley came closer. On the porch, a dead body of a child was hanged by the legs. There was a cut left by a sword on the child's back, and prick wounds from something like a needle on his neck. Taking down the boy's body, Crowley laid it down to the ground. It appeared that all the boy's blood had been extracted. Just like with the prostitutes a few days prior. Crowley didn't know what for, but the killers really stole blood.

It reeked of some sort of curse magic. Like a ritual that witches or devil worshipers would hold. However, doing it this flashy was pretty much a suicidal act. It was like the culprits were declaring war on church. Carrying out a massacre like this ensured that the Knights Templar and the Inquisition would be coming after them in no time.

"No, that's probably their objective to begin with..."

After all, they went as far as killing Gilbert who was a candidate for becoming the next Master of the Knights Templar Order. Still, what for? Who would benefit from making all the Templars their enemy?

"Ferid-kun. I want to hear what you have to say on the matter," Crowley called and turned around.

There was no Ferid in sight, however: he vanished without a trace and Crowley didn't notice when.

"Huh? Ferid-kun?"

But no response came.

"Ferid-kun, where are you?"

Crowley surveyed the village, but all he saw was dead bodies. It looked like the culprits really killed all the chasers, down to the last one.

"Later, I'll need to call the Templars here, too..." Crowley murmured heading towards the plaza found at the center of the village.

"Ferid-kun! Where are you!" he called loudly once again as he walked.

His call was finally answered. "I'm here~"

It came from a building on the northwest side of the village.

Crowley turned to look in that direction. He wasn't surprised to find the dead bodies of a man and a woman hanging from the wall of the building.

Ferid stuck his head out from the house and beckoned Crowley. "Here, here."

Crowley's eyes landed on the road that led to the house Ferid was currently in. Although all the possible leads were irretrievably destroyed by the rain earlier, when he saw the road, he understood why Ferid chose that particular building to investigate first.

Upon a closer look, it turned out that numerous footprints leading in the direction of that house could be found there. But you had to look very closely to notice. All indicated that that particular building was somehow important.

Studying the barely visible footprints on the road with his eyes, Crowley murmured to himself, "How do you find something like this at the first sight? He really is a frightening man."

With that, he headed to where Ferid was. On the way, he noticed that the footprints didn't go all the way to the house Ferid had taken a fancy to, but went on past it and towards a building farther ahead.

"Huh?" Crowley tilted his head to the side in puzzlement. Then, coming into the house where Ferid was, he asked, "Ferid-kun. The footprints seem to be leading to the house a little farther down the road."

To his surprise, he didn't find Ferid inside. Crowley checked the front room, the kitchen, still nothing. The house had no workroom, so Crowley went to check the bedroom, and that's where he finally found Ferid.

The blinds were shut, plunging the room into pitch dark. And on the bed, Ferid lay. Arms folded on his chest and eyes closed, he looked happy.

"Oh come on, Ferid-kun."

"Yees?"

"It's way too early to be so tired."

"It is way too early for me to up, normally."

"I'm amazed you feel like sleeping in a place with corpses lying all around."

"Then, do you want to say that you never once slept when you were on the Crusade, Crowley-kun?" Ferid rebuffed with a ridiculous remark.

Of course Crowley slept. With corpses all around him, too. Still...

"It's not the same. But that aside, Ferid-kun."

"You, too, noticed the footprints, I take it?"

"Uh-huh. But they all lead to—"

But Ferid interrupted him, eyes still closed, "You didn't look at the bodies, did you? This house's residents were not slain by a sword."

True, Crowley didn't check the bodies on his way here.

"...And what does that mean that they weren't?" he asked.

"It means that the master of this house did not try to run away," Ferid replied. "But why did he not? Do you think there can be found even one person who would obediently wait to be killed and not try to escape when the residents of his village are being slaughtered one after another around him?"

"...In short, what? Quit leaving me hanging and just tell me already."

"Can I do it after I have gotten my beauty sleep?"

"No."

"Ehh..." Ferid opened his eyes, clearly displeased, and tapped the ring-shaped accessory on his hand. And then...

"What do you know, the ring fixed itself," he muttered.

"Huh?"

"Nothing. Just talking to myself."

With this, he abruptly sat up, suddenly full of energy. Opening the blinds of the bedroom, he exclaimed, "O Lord! Shine more light on me. Thank you for giving us the sun."

"Just what is going on with you?"

Crowley wondered if Ferid took another ill-advised drug again or something.

Ferid was smiling cheerfully. "A little nap did wonders and I'm awake now. Alright then, what were we talking about?" "We were talking about why you chose this house."

"Aah, yes, yes, that~" With that Ferid lay down on the bed again.

"I thought you were awake now?" Crowley commented, and Ferid only laughed, rolling on the bed, then throwing himself crossways on it. After that, he leaned down and peeked under it.

"Oka~y, by not running away and letting themselves get killed, the master of this house and his wife made it so that their ch—" Ferid started his explanation, but just then—

"Uwaaaaaaaaah!" a boy of about 6 jumped out from under the bed with a knife in hand.

"Owhooa!" Ferid recoiled as if in surprise. The boy, though, still tried to thrust his knife into Ferid's chest, and Ferid cried out, "Crowley-kun!"

That sent Crowley into action the same instance, and he stepped on the boy's hand with force.

"Agh!" The knife fell out of the boy's grip. "D-Damn! Dammit!"

Crowley held down the violently struggling child.

"D-Don't kill me?!" The boy's face took on a haunted look of despair.

It appeared that he had been hiding here the whole time. According to Ferid, the culprits slaughtered the village's residents not less than 6 hours ago, so this child must have been here all this time. He was probably paralyzed with dread and couldn't move, thinking he would be killed if he came out or having been told by his parents to not come out no matter what.

The boy's face was all soggy with tears. His bottom half was wet as well. He must have soiled himself under that bed.

Taking in all of that about the boy, Crowley called out to Ferid, "Ferid-kun. I have something to ask of you."

"What could it be?"

"Can you deal with the dead bodies outside this house?"

Crowley referred to the dead bodies of this child's parents, of course. At the moment, they were atrociously dangling upside down from the wall, with all of their blood drawn out, but there was no need to show that to the boy.

"My clothes would get all dirty if I did, so no," Ferid refused Crowley's request.

Crowley, exasperated, refocused his gaze on that strange partner of his. "Can you look after the child for a while then?"

"Depends on his face. If it suits my tastes, I will not mind looking after him♪"

Ah, right. This guy was an indiscriminate pervert to whom it didn't matter who it was before him, a man or a woman. Crowley couldn't possibly entrust this child to him right now.

Sighing, Crowley turned to face the boy again. "No need to be afraid. I'm with the Knights Templar."

"Eh? Are you, now?"

"Be quiet, Ferid-kun. Keep your mouth shut for a while."

"Okay, oka~y."

Once Crowley made sure Ferid was going to keep quiet, he looked into the boy's eyes once again. They were completely drowned with fear.

Looking straight into those eyes, Crowley said with assertion, "You have survived."

"..."

"Listen to me, okay? You can relax now. No need to struggle anymore. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

At this, Crowley finally felt the boy calm down a little.

The child stared at Crowley and asked, voice shaking, "Wh-Where is Dad and Mom...?"

"Your parents protected you."

"...Th-They died?"

Crowley nodded, and tears instantly welled up in the boy's eyes. Crowley held him in his arms. The boy was a strong one. He sobbed quietly, but didn't weep. That was why he survived. Because he was able to stay under the bed for hours on end without producing any sound.

However, it didn't look like he would be able to tell them what happened any time soon. To improve his mental condition enough for him to talk, they would first need to wash off the blood and excreta from his body, have him change clothes and feed him. None of that was possible to do here.

"Ferid-kun."

"Hm?"

"What else needs to be investigated here?"

"My investigation is already over."

Crowley tossed a look at Ferid. "...Could it be that there was no need to come here in the first place?"

Ferid smirked. "And what makes you think so?"

"The fact that you're not doing any decent investigating."

"Well, true, there is no need for it. We already know the name of the chaser that made this silver needle anyway," Ferid said and took out the needle from his breast pocket again.

The name of the chaser that made it was, if Crowley remembered correctly, Haeberle - that was what they had already confirmed. They came here to obtain the list of that Haeberle's clients.

Crowley suddenly glared at Ferid. "Ferid-kun. Are you hiding something from me?"

"I'm not. Although I do not necessarily say out loud obvious things that anyone can figure out if they just use their head."

Which meant, he did keep away certain things. To begin with, Ferid seemed to have an idea about what exactly the killer's goals were. And he said earlier that he came all the way here to obtain some hard evidence that would be enough to arrest the killer.

"How about you tell me the killer's name already if you know it? And also, the reason why we came here," Crowley asked.

"Eh? You came here without even knowing the reason why?"

"Well, I was under the impression that we're here to find Haeberle's list of clients."

At that, Ferid snorted, as if to mock Crowley, and shrugged his shoulders. "And we needed to come all the way here just for that, in your opinion?"

"...I'm not up to playing riddles. Can you start explaining from the conclusion?"

But Ferid only said, having entirely too much fun, "It would not be any fun if I did that. Do you know what is written in the Bible? "If a man will not work, he shall not eat". Ah, but then again, you stopped praying and do not read the Bible anymore—"

"Ferid-kun."

That came out a little angrily, and Ferid shrugged his shoulders again, then expressed in a strangely declamatory manner, "It is such immense work making a silver needle like this. I'm willing to bet that it is extremely high-priced. Making just one would be enough to feed a chaser for a whole year, I imagine."

So he stubbornly persisted in wanting to make Crowley arrive to the necessary conclusions on his own. Good gracious, what a troublesome guy.

Crowley stared at the needle in Ferid's fingers. That was the fangs that killed those prostitutes. Something that your ordinary chaser could never hope to produce. There also could be no doubt that making such a needle would take quite a long time. The work was minute, yet the needle was stout and durable. It didn't break or get damaged even after piercing into human necks numerous times. Just making a prototype would take considerable time, for sure.

It was as Ferid said: having it made would be quite a costly endeavor. And it also required a high status. Skillful chasers' time was valuable. If so much of it was to be occupied by one job, they would have to refuse job requests from their other high profile clients. Adding to that the fact that no person of high station among those Crowley knew would lower themselves to visiting this slightly dirty workshop located so far away from the town in person led him to the conclusion that...

"There was someone in the town who acted as the client's proxy, managing the order," Crowley said, and Ferid nodded, grinning broadly.

"And?" he prompted.

"And you were able to get your hands on the client list in the town."

"Yup."

"You've already contacted that proxy person and learned the name of the client who placed the order for this need—"

Grinning Ferid didn't let him finish. "Nald Vine, a noble."

Damn, this guy really did know the name of the killer then.

Ferid went on, "And you know that name."

Yes, Crowley did know it. The second son of the noted Vine noble family and one of high ranking Templar Knights. Him and Crowley participated in the Crusade together. They fought on different battlefields, but Nald Vine also made it home alive.

Only, Crowley heard that he started acting oddly after coming back home. He turned melancholic and became prone to incoherent delirious mumbling. Soon after, he stopped coming to the Order and church.

But Crowley was the same. Ever since he had returned from that war, he stopped going to church, so he didn't know any details about how exactly Nald Vine distanced himself from the Knights Templar. Then again, quite a few knights became like that. That Crusade was just too disastrous, and there was no lack in those who chose to distance themselves from their Orders after it.

"Then, was it Nald Vine who killed Gilbert Chartres?"

"Who knows. But at the very least he is the one this needle belongs to. Moreover, it seems like after returning from the Crusade, he talked about some bizarre things. That in that war, he ran into an unkillable monster that sucked

human blood."

"...Wha, that's..."

"And that it was possible to obtain eternal life through sucking human blood. By devouring life of others, one becomes an immortal, is what he preached in delirium, it appears. Ah, but I seem to recall there was another madman who told me a similar story. Who was it, again? I think it was the man I drank wine together with once. Do you not remember hearing that story, Crowley-kun?" Ferid jested.

Needless to say, the madman he was talking about was Crowley himself. It was Crowley who saw a vampire during that last battle. And watched Victor and the rest getting massacred by him.

"So it appears you were not the only one who saw a vampire."

"...That's just ravings of a madman."

"You are his pal though."

"...Besides, that had to be a hallucination."

"I hope it was. Because if vampires did exist, I would not be able to sleep at night~" Ferid feigned a fearful expression.

It was obvious though that he was having a lot of fun with this whole business. To make it even worse, he had figured who killed Gilbert and even knew that someone else had seen a vampire, yet he didn't say anything to Crowley, not until they came all the way here, to this workshop. He must have laughed inside about it all the while the carriage rocked along the road. All the time they spent on this pointless killer hunt trip.

"Are you taking me for a fool?" Crowley asked.

Ferid shrugged to that. "Certainly not. I would not take a friend for a fool."

"Hah, someone who deceives a friend is no friend at all."

"I'm not deceiving you."

"At the very least, you didn't tell me what I needed to know."

But Ferid dismissed him with a hand wave, "No, no, I told you everything you needed to know. And even a lot of things that were not strictly necessary."

"So are you saying there was a need to come here?"

Ferid thumped himself on the chest, "Of course. Believe me."

Crowley couldn't, at all. He let a short silence fall, then said, "Then tell me the reason why we came here. Do we have solid evidence of Nald Vine's crime?"

He knew that the Vine house had too much clout for charges against one of theirs to stick if they were based on circumstantial evidence only. Things would add up if finding decisive evidence was the reason why they came here. Except of course, Ferid had plenty of chances to tell him all of that back in the carriage. If he really were Crowley's friend, that is.

Ferid looked out the window. The sun shone strong and bright. Ferid gazed up at it seemingly without a problem, despite being so dizzy from sunlight just a short while ago,

"Hmm, it still is a bit too early for me. Let us eat lunch and continue with this fun in the eveni—"

"Ferid-kun," Crowley repeated sharply, and Ferid raised both arms in surrender.

"Cannot be helped then. Have the child leave the village."

So Ferid finally felt like talking business.

Crowley, however, pondered if it was such a good idea to have the boy go outside the village all alone. If he went out of the house right now, he would see the dead bodies of his parents. Should Crowley do something to shield him from this kind of experience?

"..." No, the boy would have to accept what happened and come to grips with the truth eventually anyway. He would have to live alone from now on. His parents were dead, along with all the other residents of this village who could take care of him.

Gazing down at the boy, Crowley said, "...Can I ask you to go outside?"

The boy looked up at him.

Crowley continued, "On the street, there are dead bodies of your parents."

"..."

"They were killed in an atrocious way. As well as all the other people in this village."

"..."

"But you have survived. You're safe now. Do you understand?"

The boy nodded. It appeared he had an understanding of the situation already. He really was a strong child.

"Outside the village, you will find a carriage. Ask the driver to let you in. Say to him that it's Ferid Bathory's order."

"I understand," the boy said.

Crowley stroked his head gently. The boy then left the house.

Once he did, Ferid laughed flippantly, gazing at Crowley, "You're so kind."

"He has just lost his parents."

"The pagans you killed also had children, I bet."

"..."

"So, what were we talking about, again?"

"State the conclusion. I'm sick and tired of hearing all the transitory drivel."

"Men that have no love to give are disliked, you know."

"I'm chaste, so."

"Hahaha." Ferid laughed, but did start talking.

"Well, first, about that high ranking Templar, Nald Vine."

"Yeah."

"It seems that soon after he had returned from the war, he was disowned by his family. He really lost his mind, drinking the blood of pigs, of chickens; then killing servants and drinking their blood, muttering all the while that it would grant him immortality."

"..."

"Sooner or later, the family would become targets of the Inquisition if they kept a man like him around. I'm not sure though if becoming immortal through blood drinking is black magic or some kind of curse..."

"His whole family would be punished if they kept associating with him."

"That is right. And that is why they abandoned Nald Vine. Giving him a certain amount of money, they disowned him, excluding him from the Vine family. His mansion was pretty much abandoned. But the Inquisition still made no move, because he himself did not get in touch with anyone."

"In that case, there is no need for evidence to kill Nald Vine," Crowley commented, and Ferid nodded.

"Seems so. By the way, as per my investigation, all the servants, save for one, abandoned him, too. Those around him loathe and avoid him."

"Who, you investigated to that extent?"

"Well, I could investigate something like this on the same day I drank wine with you."

"Now, wait a second. Does that mean that if you had just told me about the culprit on that day, Gilbert could've been saved?" Crowley demanded to know.

If that was how it was... If that was how things were, he would—

But just then Ferid's face twisted into an exasperated grimace as he said, "Why don't you start using your head, Crowley-kun?"

"..." Using his head, huh? That meant... "...Nald Vine isn't the one behind it, is that what you're saying?"

Playing with the silver needle in his nimble fingers, Ferid answered, "The murder of the prostitutes was nothing short of perfect. Like a form of art. It very well looked like the doing of a madman taken by some sort of delusion. But the question is, was it possible for a single madman to commit such a crime?"

That prompted Crowley to recall the 8 prostitutes that were killed all at once. 7 of the bodies were hanged upside down by the legs at equal intervals, all of their blood removed, with not a single drop left in the bodies. Indeed, if you thought about it, you would question if one madman, hiding in a back alley, could do it without being seen.

Ferid, meanwhile, continued, "In addition, one of the victims was killed in a very sloppy way. Like the murderer suddenly cut corners, leaving a lead behind. As if to have us believe that some kind of trouble occurred midway. Sure enough, evidence did remain. This silver needle." He lifted his hand holding the needle. "Having a lead like this, it is easy to trace it back to the owner. The man with Haeberle's client list, too, owned up in no time at all. It is such a pity, you know... that these days, loyalty seems to be out of fashion."

So it appeared from what Ferid said that all pointed to there being another culprit. And that culprit tried to set Nald Vine up. But who could it be?

Ferid continued, "Let us move on. Was Gilbert Chartres weak?"

Gilbert was strong, of course. He was a man with a talent for swordfighting and he always worked hard without sparing effort. That was the precise reason why he was named the next Master candidate.

Ferid asked his next question, "Was it possible to easily kill him?"

"No way."

"Was it possible for Nald Vine?"

"Out of question. Nald Vine was a spoiled rich heir. He didn't know what hard work even was. There is no way he would be able to kill Gilbert. Not to mention, he is a former Templar. He would surely stand out if he ever showed his face at the HQ."

Ferid chuckled, "Now we're talking. Finally feel like using your head?"

Crowley thought back to how Gilbert's deathscene looked. His face was twisted in terror and despair. But there were no wounds on the body except for the punctures on his neck. It didn't look like he was stabbed with a sword anywhere either. His own sword remained sheathed, too. Which meant that he couldn't even resist. That strong and hard-working man couldn't even put up a fight.

Ferid spoke up again, "The next question is, who killed Gilbert then? Was it the vampire you ran into in the war? But if a vampire possessing such incredible strength did exist, would he stoop to playing such petty tricks?"

He wouldn't. That thing wasn't that kind of easy opponent. When Crowley confronted that creature, what he felt was absolutely unavoidable death. That monster wouldn't stoop to such petty tricks. Then, who would?

"..." Crowley recalled the dead bodies of the workers they found in front of the entrance to the chasers' village. Those men looked like they were slain by several well trained soldiers. The soldiers of an organization possessing enough power to massacre a settlement of 40 people with no problem.

"Was it the Templar Order that killed Gilbert?" Crowley voiced.

The Knights Templar killed Gilbert and were trying to set up Nald Vine who lost his mind after returning from the war to take the fall. They went as far as killing the prostitutes and even the chasers for that.

All those crimes were committed by the Knights Templar...

Ferid was smirking in a way that expressed in no uncertain words the sentiment of "took you long enough". "By the way, Crowley-kun. I do not really believe in God myself, so I wanted to ask you. Is killing comrades and framing them for a murder considered the shortest way to Heaven these days?"

Needless to say, that wasn't what they all were taught. What Crowley learned from the Commander was how to kill as many enemies as possible and die for his comrades. Only that.

Crowley's hand moved unconsciously to reach for the rosary on his neck.

"Here you go touching it again," Ferid pointed out immediately.

Crowley frowned. "Since when did you know the truth?"

"I wonder."

"Answer."

"When we found this needle, I did not yet. But when Gilbert-kun was killed, I figured the killer's goal right aw—"

"Why didn't you tell me at the time?!"

"Hah, and what would you do if you knew? Unsheathe the sword you are so good with right inside the Templars' HQ and kill the ringleaders? You would only end up getting killed yours—"

"Give me the names of the ringleaders!"

With this, Crowley extended his hand towards Ferid. Grabbing him by the lapels, he slammed the silver-haired man against the wall with great force. But Ferid, completely unruffled, only continued to grin like a fool.

"No, I will not. If I did, it would only play into their hands. They do not necessarily have to pin the crime on Nald Vine. After all, there is another knight who shows signs of having gone insane. Setting you up as Gilbert's murderer is wh—"

"Shut the hell up and tell me the names of Gilbert's murde—"

"And what will you do then? To start with, do you think you have the right to be angry? If only you had not distanced yourself from the Knights Templar, you would not have needed to ask me who the ringleaders were. You would have known yourself who was Gilbert's rival for the position of the next Master."

"..."

"But you have no way of knowing. Because you are not a Templar Knight anymore. You introduced yourself as someone with the Knights Templar when you saved the child earlier, haha, do not make me laugh. You have already run away from your comrades and from God, wrong?"

"...I..."

"Gilbert-kun was involved in politics and faced a crisis. He needed the hero to return to overcome it. But that hero lost God and refused to come back no matter what."

"..."

"Roy Rouland who visited you on the day of Gilbert-kun's funerals is in the same situation. Gilbert's faction has lost its leader. It is collapsing. Moreover, that leader was killed by his fellow knights. There are very few comrades the members can trust now. After all, the enemy is very careful, and the type of people who would stop at nothing, even at killing their political opponent and pinning the blame on the innocent. But still, if the hero had returned at that point..."

"..."

Ferid grinned and paused. Then he softly touched Crowley's hand and continued, "If you say that you would suddenly and very conveniently have regained God and returned to the Knights Templar had I told you all of this at that point, then yes, I am a traitor, I suppose. My apologies. But you see, even I have my own brand of justice. These developments cannot be stopped anymore. Even if you had returned, you would only have ended up getting killed together with Roy Rouland. That is why—"

"You prevented me from going to the funerals, taking me to this far away place a good distance away from the town

instead, huh..."

Finally Crowley understood what Ferid's goal was. He pulled Crowley away from the center of the political strife. So that Crowley wouldn't get killed.

Ferid grinned, "Aren't I being considerate of my friend? It is about time you started calling me your best friend, even."

Indeed, he may have saved Crowley's life. However...

"I didn't ask you to."

"And had you returned to the Order when Gilbert begged you to?"

"..."

"Oops, was this harassing a bit too much for you to take?"

Crowley released Ferid's lapels. Everything Ferid said was sound arguments. All the things Crowley could have realized himself if only he tried. Except that he hadn't noticed. He hadn't even tried to notice.

Grabbing at the rosary, Crowley pressed it into his own chest with force. As if trying to trick the pain pulsing deep within his chest. But the pain didn't go away. The strong ache showed no signs of alleviating.

"...Damn it, Ferid-kun."

"Yeees?"

"You went too far with your harassment, and now my chest is hurting."

"Hahaha."

"It's no laughing matter."

"It is not, I suppose. Losing God is always a tragedy." Ferid's countenance took on a tinge of sadness, if only a barely noticeable one.

Watching it, Crowley couldn't help asking, "Did you lose God, too?"

"A very lo~ng time ago."

"We're not that far apart in age though?"

"Are we not, now?"

"Say, Ferid-kun."

"Hm?"

"Is Roy going to be killed?" Crowley asked.

Even though he knew the answer. But he couldn't help asking anyway. That was because he was weak, no doubt.

Ferid replied immediately and easily, "Yes, unfortunately."

"Could I make it in time if I returned now?"

"You could, had you returned when Gilbert-kun asked you."

But that was a thing of the distant past now, something hopeless that could never be undone. After all, Gilbert was already dead.

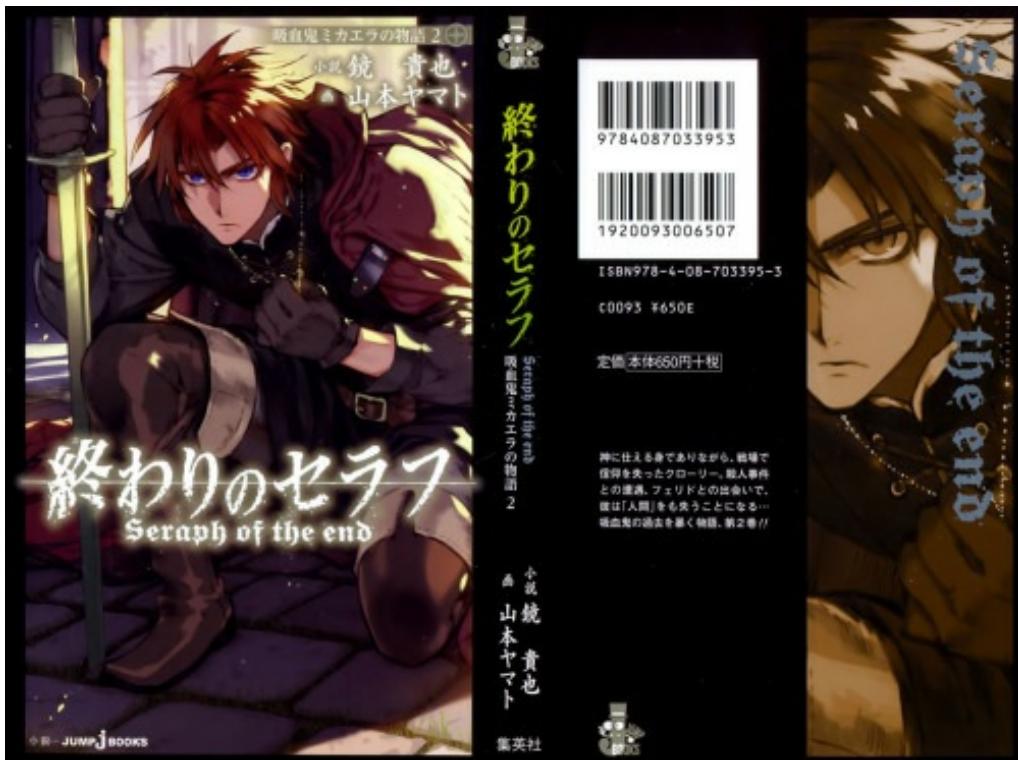
Staring at the floor, Crowley sighed and said in what sounded like a sob, "...Is that so."

"Yes."

With that, Ferid was considerate enough to fall silent for a while.

CHILLY TERRITORY

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The last days of Crowley's life as a human...

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 3 (part 2/5) (volume 2, pages 105-125)

◆◆◆

On a night half a month later, it was raining again. The downpour was severe, so heavy that you couldn't see even a few steps in front of you if you didn't peer ahead intensely.

The bloodsucking serial murders that had been going on in the town lately kept the town's population in terror even now. Gilbert Chartes, Roy Rouland and several more Templars had been killed, and the chaser village had been massacred wholly.

The rumors about a curse hanging over the town and a bloodsucking monster on the prowl were the talk of the town. No one dared walk after dark, and the town was completely still and silent at night.

But on that night, behind the veil of the rain, peals of laughter could be heard. The jovial voices of men coming out of a tavern. They were intrepid high ranking Templar Knights who feared not the vampire prowling the night.

There were 7 of them. Those men clamored so much that it was hard to believe they were supposed to have been sworn to honorable poverty, chastity and pliability.

"..."

Crowley, dressed for rain, watched the men intently through the dark. They all were the knights he knew, both in the

faces and by the names. He himself had saved their lives in that war.

Crowley headed straight for the men.

As he approached, one of them noticed him. That knight was the most skilled among that particular group. Staring at Crowley, he barked, "Who the hell are you?"

That prompted the other men focus their gazes on Crowley, too.

In response, Crowley said, "...Tremble in fear. For I'm the bloodsucking monster."

The knights didn't tremble in fear however. Of course they wouldn't. Because it was them who, impersonating a bloodsucking monster, killed the prostitutes, the chasers and even their own comrades from the Templar Order.

Exchanging glances between themselves, the men burst out into roaring laughter.

"Huh? What kind of joke is that, pal?"

"If you're looking to rob us, you chose the wrong guys to mess with. We're Templar Knights, you see. I don't know how many of you you brought with you, but you better stop with the stupid j—"

The man didn't finish the spiel as Crowley's sword beheaded him.

"Wh..?!"

The other 6 men unsheathed their swords the same instance. You had to give it to them, the results of being trained by a chivalric order showed. Their reaction, if nothing else, was praiseworthy.

"Who are you?!"

Crowley lopped off the left leg of the man who asked that question at the base.

"Gwaargh!"

"He's a strong one! Surround him!"

Crowley got encircled. A sword was thrust at him from the right. But he evaded it just by shifting his body a little. All the attack did was to put a small rip into his rain gear. As a payback, Crowley's sword ripped through the attacker's abdomen.

With that, only 4 opponents were left.

Crowley swerved about. The motion made the hood of his rain gear fall off his head, exposing his face. Shock twisted the men's features when they saw that face.

"Crowley Eusford..."

"Why are you bastard—?!"

Crowley interrupted, "You were the ones who killed Gilbert and Roy, correct?"

"N-No, wait a sec. There were circumstances that—"

The head of the man rolled before he had the chance to finish his excuses.

There was no need to hear out their circumstances anymore.

Only 3 men remained now.

The three sensed that they had no chance of winning, and attempted to make a disjoint getaway. Crowley's sword cut into the back of one of the running men. Then, producing a knife out of his pocket, Crowley threw it, aiming for

the neck of the man escaping in the opposite direction. The knife pierced through the curtain of the rain, flying in a perfectly straight line, to lodge into the man's neck. The man died instantly.

That left only one.

The surviving man was the most skilled swordsman among the group. But he only ran for his life, escaping and not even trying to look back to see what became of his comrades. Like he didn't even know that according to the doctrine of the Knights Templar, as long as a knight wasn't outnumbered by more than 3 to 1, retreating was forbidden.

Crowley gave chase.

After running for a short while, he caught up with the man. The man, sensing that making a clean escape was impossible, twirled around and raised his sword for a swing. He was decently fast, just as Crowley knew him to be. Crowley took the attack head-on, letting their swords clash several times. On one of the attacks he twisted his blade in a way that drew the opponent's into his motion.

The man's sword, entangled by Crowley's own, got torn out of the hand holding it and thrown into midair.

"Damn!" the man screamed. "Damn! Dammit! Dammit all!"

Crowley came face to face with the man, sword raised overhead and ready to strike him down.

"P-Please wait!" the man besought him then. "What good would it do to you if you killed me?! I did all of that for the future of the Knights Templar!"

"..."

"Besides, we're not the only ones involved! If you wanna kill us all, you will have to kill several hundreds!"

Looking down at the man coldly, Crowley said, "...Maybe, but you are the ringleaders."

"We did it for justice! For the future of the Order! Neither Gilbert nor Roy would want you doing this. And neither would Commander Alfred! So come on, Crowley. Listen to what I have to say. No, you should just return to the Order. Everybody is wai—"

"Unfortunately, there is no justice in what I'm doing." With that, Crowley brought his sword down.

The man's body got bisected in two, and his upper half fell down to the ground. Blood flowed in rivers, but the rain washed it all away in no time.

For a while, Crowley just stood there, staring down at the dead bodies of those who once used to be his brethren-in-arms.

The rain poured down heavily as ever. From the tears the swords opened up in his rain gear, water permeated inside. The clothes underneath got drenched, weighting down Crowley's body.

Suddenly, Ferid appeared next to Crowley.

"Crowley-kun. You promised you would escape right after," he said.

"...You should worry about yourself. If you're seen here, you'll be imprisoned."

"Well, I believe we should be safe for a while. After all, everybody is holed up in the safety of their houses, terrified of the non-existent vampire."

"I just killed that vampire," Crowley said, and Ferid, too, shifted his attention to the body cleaved in two, lying on the ground.

"Well, this is strange. Weren't vampires supposed to be immortal monsters?"

"I don't feel like cracking jokes."

"Then let's go back. I have warm soup prepared for you in my mansion."

Crowley glanced at Ferid. The other man was still grinning flippantly, same as ever, but right now, to Crowley, it felt like that frivolous attitude was helping him.

"I want some meat with that."

"What about your oath of abstinence?"

"My being a Templar Knight is in the past now."

"Hahaha."

♦ ♦ ♦

Crowley went back to his everyday life. His calm and peaceful life, where every day was spent only on teaching children swordplay.

His students showed seriousness and commitment to training, incomparable to what it used to be before. Ever since the rumor of a vampire roaming the streets spread, everyone had been looking for a way to overcome their dread.

Lately, Crowley's squire, Jose, would also come to help teach the students. The reason why Crowley wasn't in a hurry to put a stop to his frequent visits, despite Jose persistently and noisily begging him to return to the Knights Templar at every chance he got, was because that way he could stay in the loop of what was going on in the Order.

With 7 of the high ranking Templars killed, he could keep up with the moves of the other knights to a certain degree through Jose and would know it if they made the connection between him and the seven's murder.

"Crowley-sama," a voice called out to him.

It belonged to the boy he had saved in the chasers' village. The boy said his name was Marlon, aged 8. Crowley allowed him to live in his house for the period until the boy found a job, but actually, perhaps due to him being the son of craftsmen, it turned out that the boy was well trained and excelled in all kinds of housework and everyday chores. Ever since he had come to live with Crowley, all the nooks and crannies of the house were so squeak clean that the visiting maid that was in charge of cleaning lamented the lack of work left to her.

Boys be boys, and this one was no exception, appearing to be taking an interest in the sword lately. Jose was teaching him some basics, and the boy started talking with passion about how he wanted to become a splendid knight like Crowley in the future and join the Knights Templar.

"Jose-sama has come to see you, sir," Marlon said.

Crowley grimaced before commenting, "Again? He's been coming pretty much every day..."

"It is only natural, sir! Because I'm your squire, Crowley-sama. And I'm an assistant teacher at your training school!" Jose's voice came as he barged in without waiting for an invitation.

"You're not even strong yourself."

"Of course I cannot hold a candle to you, Crowley-sama, but I'm stronger than the students. Speaking of, Crowley-sama, please teach me some easy things, too."

"Uh, let's just say that you're plenty strong and leave it at that."

"Crowley-sama!"

Not missing a beat, Jose went straight to the kitchen to leave there some fruits he brought with him, then started discussing with Marlon what they should make for dinner. Good gracious, it looked like he was planning to stay here till evening then.

"Ah, but listen to this, Crowley-sama. I only taught Marlon swordplay a little, but it looks like he has amazing talent for

it. If it goes like this, the day when he leaves me in the dust is not far."

Hearing Jose's words, Marlon blushed, looking delighted. Indeed, Jose would make a good teacher. The type very different from Commander Alfred, one that helped his students grow through praise.

But well...

"Jose."

"Yes, sir?"

"Your basics are somewhat lacking."

For some reason, when he heard that, Jose's eyes sparkled happily. "You are finally going to teach me, right, Crowley-sama!"

"Eh? Ah, no, that's not what I..."

"What basics specifically, sir? I'm ready to work on all of them of course, but from which should I start? A-And, may I draw my sword?"

"No."

"Please!" Jose pleaded, and Crowley caved, giving the squire a signal with his chin to draw.

Jose unsheathed his sword and took the fighting stance precisely according to how it was taught in the Templar Order.

Across from them, Marlon, a dust cloth in hand, was watching them with intense attention. Crowley had to smile wryly at that.

Jose requested Crowley's next instructions, "How should I move now, sir?"

"Don't. Just lower your hips more."

"Y-Yes, sir."

"Lower."

"Yes, sir!"

"Now, stay like that."

"Yes, sir!"

"For 5 hours."

"Ye— Eh?! Is that a joke, sir?!"

"Back in my time, I was told not to move for half a year by my mentor," Crowley shrugged.

"I will do my best for 5 hours, sir!"

Taking out a training sword from among those that were used for practice, Marlon came asking Crowley with hope, "M-May I do it, too, sir?"

"Yeah, go ahead. The house is plenty clean already anyway."

Receiving permission from Crowley, happy-looking Marlon rushed to stand next to Jose and also took the basic stance. His stance was plenty low and steady. It looked like Jose's words about the boy having talent were true. He would grow strong, no doubt, if trained right, and make an excellent Templar Knight. Except that it was the Templar Knights that killed his parents.

"Jose-sama. Allow me to join you."

"Sure! Let's do this, Marlon!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Ah, but my legs are already shaking."

"Let us persevere!"

Crowley chuckled. Jose was hopeless. He didn't look to be blessed with any talent. But he was kind and could easily

make everyone around him love him. And as far as Crowley was concerned, it was a good thing, and he should have just stayed that way forever. Because even if he attained the strength of Crowley's level, he wouldn't be able to protect anyone.

"I'll be out for a while."

"Ah! Then I'll..." Jose started, wanting to follow, but realized that he was currently in the middle of an exercise. Crowley grinned broadly, "5 hours, remember."

Jose's face fell as he realized he had been tricked.

Crowley walked out of the house, laughing all the while. It was still midday outside. Once they noticed Crowley, his neighbors hurried to greet him one after another with smiling faces.

"Ah, Crowley-sama."

"Going out, Crowley-sama?"

Crowley threw in appropriate words to each of them.

At this hour, the streets were still full of people. But no one would be left on them once the dusk fell.

The serial bloodsucking murder case had yet to be solved, after all. Not only did the investigation fail to get any closer to identifying the killer, the number of victims even grew by the day, and 7 strong Templar Knights were killed on their way back from a tavern.

"..."

Needless to say, the one to kill them was Crowley himself. Despite that, the Order had yet to proclaim Nald Vine, whom they had long been preparing to frame for Gilbert's murder, the main suspect. Probably because the Order was in a chaos now that the ringleaders had been killed.

But things wouldn't stay like that for long. These murders put a stain on the name of the Knights Templar. In addition, if such bizarre killings were to continue, the Inquisition would come to these lands, as well. And that couldn't bode well for the knights. An in-depth investigation might reveal things better stay buried, and the knights' honor would doubtlessly suffer if it was exposed for all to see that the Knights Templar couldn't solve a crime of this caliber on their own.

That's why Crowley was sure that before long, they would come to arrest Nald Vine as the one responsible for the serial killings. And later, he would be executed, no doubt.

Crowley had no intention of helping him. Nald Vine had already been broken beyond salvation, killing his servants and employees and sucking their blood. His sins had piled up, and by this point he had done more than enough evil to warrant such punishment.

But still...

"..."

Not far ahead from Crowley, a carriage of an elegant make came to a halt. Crowley knew the driver boy. His name was Khinueh, if Crowley remembered right. The boy lived in Ferid's mansion.

Crowley headed towards the carriage. When he approached, the driver boy opened the door for him politely.

"Please get in, Crowley-sama."

"Thanks."

Crowley got into the carriage, taking a seat across from Ferid.

Not looking at him, Ferid said, "Hello, Crowley-kun. It has been a while."

"Yeah."

"How have you been doing since we last saw each other?"

"We last saw each other only 3 days ago."

"Well, I'm so bored when you're not around~"

"But nothing amusing will happen around me anymore. The vampire hunt is already over."

Ferid inclined his head to the side in doubt, "Is it now? The town is still abuzz with this talk though."

No, that infamous vampire preoccupied with the political power struggle was definitely dead. Crowley killed him himself. There was no one anymore for this town's residents to fear.

Watching Crowley mirthfully, Ferid remarked, "Besides, our quest to find the real vampire is not finished yet. The one that you saw in that battle—"

"The illusionary vampire, huh."

"Nald Vine says he saw him, too."

"Ravings of a madman."

"And not only saw; taken with that vampire, he even started drinking blood, as the rumor has it. I certainly think we should go talk to him about it before he gets executed."

"...So the reason why you called me today is...?"

"I just wanted to see the face of the friend."

"And?"

Ferid broke out into a wide grin at that. "And to tell him that the decision concerning Nald Vine's arrest has been made. In 5 days the Templars will announce the killer with much grandeur and arrest him."

Crowley had a feeling it would happen soon, and it, apparently, was going to at last.

But Jose didn't say anything about it to Crowley. Probably because he didn't know yet. Yet Ferid knew something that even one of the members of the Order didn't.

"Good grief. Just where are you getting such information?"

Ferid chuckled, "I heard from a certain high profile personage."

"Of the Order?"

"Even higher."

Crowley sighed, then said, "Well, aren't you blessed with many friends. There is no need whatsoever for you to keep coming for me anymore, no?"

"What is it, jealousy? But I just happen to like people like you. People who do not forget their boyish heart and keep dreaming of vam—"

"Yeah, yeah."

"Let me finish~" Ferid complained and ordered the boy driver to get the carriage moving. The carriage's place of destination was to be Nald Vine's mansion.

"I didn't consent to going," Crowley said.

He didn't think anything good would come out of going to Vine's mansion. After all, Nald Vine had gone irrevocably insane. And he was likely being monitored by the Templars. If Crowley was seen contacting Nald Vine, it could result in harm not only to himself but also to all of those who were close to him, including Jose and Marlon.

But just then, Ferid, as if reading Crowley's mind, reassured him, "No need to worry. You will not be punished. The Order of the Knights Templar is dying a very unsightly death as we speak. They may want to set you up as the hero of the past Crusade and use the name of Crowley Eusford, but they do not see the need to set you up for a crime

and kill you."

"And what if we get slain despite that assurance of yours that it won't happen?"

"Then I will apologize handsomely."

"And will kiss goodbye to your head soon after, as it may be."

Ferid gazed at Crowley with delight in his eyes. "You want to go see Nald Vine, too, though. You just cannot resist wanting to know for sure if what you saw in that war was a hallucination or not."

"..."

"You want to learn what it was that killed your comrades. You want to know if it really was a dream that the weakness of your heart conjured for you. What if it was not? What if that being was a genuine vampire, through and through? What would you do then?"

"I wouldn't get involved with it in any way," Crowley replied to Ferid's curiosity.

There was no way to win against that thing. Being slashed and stabbed with swords didn't work on it. How did one fight an opponent like that?

Ferid still observed him, grinning broadly. "Your face says that you want revenge."

"..."

"And as far as I'm concerned, I cannot possibly let a friend stay obsessed with a monster from a delusion and keep watching nightmares for the rest of his life."

"That being your reason why you think I need to see Nald Vine, is that it?"

"That's right."

"All for my sake, huh?" Crowley inquired.

"Aren't I a kind friend?" Ferid chuckled mirthfully again.

Was he, though? If the silver-haired man really was, then he should invite Ferid for dinner once this was over, Crowley decided.

The carriage was closing in on the place of its destination - a mansion on the outskirts of the town. One look at that residence was enough to know that its dweller had lost his mind.

The premises were overrun with weed, the walls were chipped and the windows were broken. Lack of proper maintenance alone couldn't possibly do that much damage.

"Raid-and-plunder-all-you-want buffet, eh," Ferid chuckled.

"Nothing you didn't see when you visited this place before, I bet, though?" Crowley ventured.

"I reserved the pleasure for when you are with me, you see."

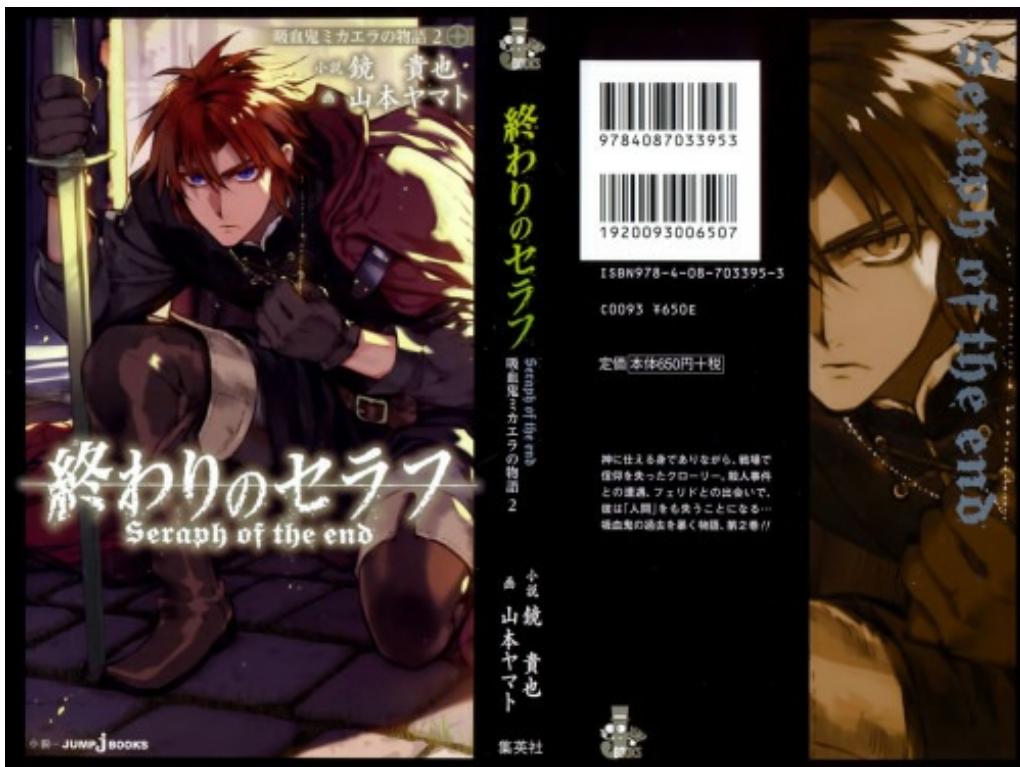
"So this is your first time coming here?"

"In person, yes."

That was probably true, since Ferid looked like he was having a lot of fun.

CHILLY TERRITORY

 chilly-territory.tumblr.com/post/144562467975/seraph-of-the-end-the-story-of-vampire-michaela



If you have a weak stomach, you might want to avoid eating anything before reading this part (because some of the descriptions in it are not appetizing). And also, I just have to say it: damn you, Ferid, damn you to hell for all eternity.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 3 (part 3/5) (volume 2, pages 125-153)

The two got out of the carriage in front of the main gate. No one came out to meet them. There were no guards or servants either.

The two of them trespassed onto the premises right through the front gate with no trouble whatsoever. The door to the mansion wasn't locked. And still no one was coming to meet them.

The inner yard of the residence was in the same state of neglect as the outer one. For all intents and purposes, it looked like it hadn't seen any tending for the longest time. With the state of things being that sorry, it was more than likely that nights burglars raided this mansion countless times. One even had to wonder if Nald Vine really still lived here.

The two walked along a hallway. It didn't take any searching to know what way to take, because the farther into the house they went, the stronger the awful stench was getting.

The putrid smell, the rotten smell and the smell of blood.

The stench of death.

According to Ferid, Nald Vine was taken with the idea of immortality and started drinking human blood.

"Probably here." Ferid came to a stop in front of a certain door.

Crowley, too, knew from one glance that this was the room where Nald Vine could be found. Because from the crack under the door, a puddle of blood leaked out.

Stepping on that blood-stained floor, Crowley stood before the door. His hand turned the handle. Ferid stepped back and behind him, as if in fright.

"You will go in first of course, I hope? Since I'm weak and all."

Crowley gave him a strained smile and ventured inside.

The room was rather spacious. There were a few barrels lined up along one side of it. They were the source of the stench. It was more than likely that the contents was blood. Blood that had gone bad, too.

In the middle of that spacious room, a skinny and sick-looking man in his mid thirties desperately sucked at the neck of a dead woman.

Disgusting slurping sounds of suction were filling the space. He was sucking blood, apparently. The victim looked like she died quite some time ago. Her blood had already coagulated. But still, Nald Vine kept eagerly sucking it with empty eyes.

He was completely insane.

He was Crowley's ex brother-in-arms, yet if Crowley hadn't known for sure that he was looking at Nald Vine, he would have never recognized him.

"Nald Vine," stepping in front of the man, Crowley called his name.

Hearing it, Vine raised his head. His eyes were unfocused, as expected. Still, he ground out, "Crowley-kun, huh? So you made it back alive, too?"

"Yeah."

"Good for you."

And for you, it may have been better to have died in that war, Crowley thought in a corner of his mind, but didn't voice it.

Instead, he asked, "What are you doing?"

"Eating," Nald answered.

"What you're eating is a human."

"Yeah. I'm drinking the blood."

"Why? There are plenty of other things to eat. Your family is a prosperous one. You don't have to worry about starving."

Nald laughed. "Are you going to call me a madman, too?"

"I didn't call you that. I'm just asking: why are you drinking blood?"

"Because it will make me immortal."

"Drinking blood can't grant immortality."

"Can't it now?"

"It can't."

"But I've seen it with my own eyes. In that war. I've seen a monster that wrecked people like they were toys and drank their blood."

At that, Crowley's eyes narrowed. Because he, too, had seen it. The unbelievably beautiful man that clearly was

something inhuman.

Crowley recalled him. Remembered what that monster he kept seeing in his dreams countless times looked like.

Just when only a little separated Crowley's group from safety, that man appeared before them. He wore black clothes and had tanned skin. His hair was also black. They were in the middle of a battlefield, yet that man had no weapons on him. His eyes were red. Blood-red. When his thin lips opened, a pair of sharp fangs much like those of a beast sprang from under them.

Had Nald Vine met that man, too?

Crowley asked his next question, "What on earth happened there?"

At that, Nald suddenly yelled at him, "You just want to make a fool out of me, too, no?!"

"I'm not g—"

Nald didn't let him finish, suddenly crying out in a crazy-sounding voice. "Aagh! Aaaaaaaagh! Aaaaaaaaaagh! Blood! I will get killed by him if I don't drink blood! Immortality! I'll become immortal!"

Tossing away the corpse of the woman he was cradling in his arms until now, he plunged his head into the barrel closest to him, drinking the liquid inside. Crowley could hear him swallow noisily.

"Ghah, haa, haa." He choked on the blood, spitting it out. His head, his face and his whole body was stained with blood. He flopped down to the floor.

"Since when haven't you been eating?" Crowley asked.

"I'm immortal. Unkillable."

"You're skin and bones. You're at death's door."

"I'm a vampire!"

"Nald."

"Fear me! I'm going to suck your blood, too!" With that, Nald started to approach Crowley staggeringly.

Crowley pushed him in the chest, feeling how light the other man's body was. Back when Nald had been a Templar Knight, he was a plump man. Enough for Crowley to think that the man definitely needed to lose some of that extra weight.

Nald fell to the floor. "Damn! Damn!"

"What happened?"

"...You won't believe me even if I told you. No one does."

"Talk."

"..."

"What happened on that battlefield?"

At that, Nald finally started talking. 70 of them had survived the last battle. Repelling the enemy, somehow or other they managed to almost reach the main body of the army to join up with them. Just when they almost made it, a single man appeared. Just one man, all on his own. That man killed 70 Templar Knights, laughing all the while, and drank their blood like it was the most delicious thing in the world. They couldn't even put up a fight. The man's movements were just too fast, and he was mindblowingly strong. And everyone understood right away that he wasn't human. He was a bloodsucking devil. A vampire. 70 knights had been killed easily and in no time at all. Halfway through that massacre, they lost all will to resist and just let things happen.

"..."

It was the same. The story that Nald Vine told was identical to Crowley's own. That man did exist after all. And on

that battlefield, Nald Vine ran into the same opponent. That dark-skinned, dark-haired man dressed in black—

Except Nald's next words were, "That silver-haired man killed everyone."

"...Eh? Silver-haired?"

"He had red eyes and white skin. I won't ever be able to forget him. His frivolous laughter and his shallow yet beautiful face."

That was someone else. Someone clearly different from the one Crowley saw.

Just then, behind Nald's back, another man materialized. The man's hair was glossy, sleek and silver, and his eyes were red. His skin was white and almost translucent. It was Ferid.

Except he was supposed to be behind Crowley. Crowley was sensing his presence behind his back just a moment ago. That's why Ferid being next Nald was odd. It was impossible to traverse that distance in an instant. At least, impossible for a normal human.

Ferid laughed flippantly. His hand held Nald by the hair. Nald's head had already been severed from the rest of his body. From the torso, blood gushed. Crowley didn't see any of the movements that caused all of that.

Ferid, addressing the head he held in his hand, said, "This will not do. Pretending a vampire will make the real thing take offense." His full pink lips stretched into a grin as he watched Crowley.

Staring at him, Crowley asked, "...Just what is the meaning of this?"

Ferid laughed, "I told you to use your head, remember?"

"Who are you?"

"I'm your friend."

"Enough with the jokes. Are you a vampire?"

Ferid smiled thinly. Affirmative, then. This was the truth behind this man's mysterious identity.

Crowley was aware that he probably couldn't win this. He couldn't see the man move. And he had no doubt that this man was just as strong as the monster from the war.

Ferid said, "Well then, what will you do? You have finally found a vampire. A real one, at that. Going to scream "Revenge!" now?"

Screaming would not change the fact that Crowley was powerless. He wouldn't be able to win against this creature as he was now. Even if his comrades had been killed before his eyes.

Ferid threw Nald Vine's head to the floor. Nald, too, was a Templar Knight in the past. As well as the members of the unit Nald was part of. Although that unit wasn't under Commander Alfred's command, Crowley had acquaintances among them.

This creature still killed his comrades.

Even so, he couldn't possibly lose his head and scream revenge right now. If he got himself killed, he wouldn't be able to ever extract revenge.

That's why Crowley said, "...You weren't the one who killed Victor and the rest of my group. I wasn't very close with Nald and his unit."

Crowley wasn't sure how good he managed to hide his thoughts and the rage seething inside him. After all, this creature could see through everything.

Ferid smiled and said, "So we can still be friends, then?"

Crowley shook his head, "Don't bet on it. You have been hiding too much from me. It's impossible to be friends when it's all built on lies."

"Is it, now? I do not think I lied all that much to you though?"

"You weren't even human to begin with."

"And have you asked me if I was human or not?"

"..."

"Besides, I did let you know that I was a vampire~? I said that I cannot die, didn't I? And that I was hated by God. You just did not believe me."

Indeed, he did mention something along those lines. Gleefully, at that. He had been playing this whole time, watching weak humans struggle frantically and crawl foolishly on the ground below.

"You must have had a lot of fun, huh."

"Yup. Being around you is unusually fun."

"Is it, now?"

"It is."

"Then, if it's so fun for you, can you tell me something while we're at it?"

"What do you want to know?"

"I want to know about the dark-skinned vampire I came across in the war. Do you know him?"

Ferid broke into a broad grin. So he knew. Knew everything.

"What is his name?"

"You would not be able to reach him even if I told you."

"Tell me, if you're my friend."

"For argument's sake, even if you do reach him, you will only get killed before you can even touch him. And I believe I told you before that I'm too tender-hearted to sit on my hands and watch my friend getting killed."

"Yeah, right."

"Hahaha," Ferid laughed.

When they chatted like that, it wasn't much different from how they always talked, when Crowley was still under the illusion of this man being a human.

But the man was a vampire. This creature was a bloodsucker. Yet he had always been following Crowley. There had to be a reason why he attached himself to Crowley.

"Say, Ferid-kun."

"Yes, what is it?"

"What is your goal?"

"I'm observing."

"Whom?"

Ferid breathed out slowly, then inhaled, and only then pointed his finger straight at Crowley. "You. I'm making sure that you will not obsess over someone and waste your life on worthless revenge. Because, you see, you are my friend. So the one you should obsess over is me, you know? Me and me alone, for all eternity."

But just then, voices came from outside the mansion. "Nald Vine! Come on out! You're under arrest for the murder of Gilbert Chartes!"

Those were the voices of Templar Knights. Ferid said they were going to come arrest Nald in 5 days, but apparently, it was another lie.

Today. The arrest had been scheduled for today. But currently, there was a genuine vampire in this mansion. If the

knights ventured into the house now, they all would be killed.

"Don't! Don't come inside! Leave at once!" Crowley screamed at the top of his lungs, making a dash towards the window found in that big room. But before he knew it, Ferid was already standing in front of the window. And again, Crowley didn't see him move. The creature was so fast that Crowley's eyes couldn't keep up.

Casual as ever and not perturbed in the least, Ferid commented mirthfully, "Just look at this: Crowley Eusford-kun is desperately trying to save his comrades, yet for some reason the comrades do not believe him."

"Shut up, Nald Vine! You bastard, how dare you kill your own comrades! We'll string you up for that!"

"Aah♪ Aah♪ Commander Alfred. It's happening again. I can't save my comrades yet again. I couldn't follow your order. Why is this happening? Where are Thou, O Lord...?" the vampire was almost singing the words of mockery.

Crowley unsheathed his sword. He needed to prevent his comrades from coming here no matter what. Or they would be killed again. They would be killed, and he would not be able to protect them.

Crowley swung his sword with all he was worth.

But Ferid didn't even move. Grasping Crowley's sword between his fingers, he snapped it in two easily. Crowley knew that was what would happen. Last time, it was the same. He had already fought a vampire. He knew that these creatures weren't someone a human could win against.

But still...

"I gotta kill you here!" Crowley thrust his broken sword forward.

Ferid laughed, "I watched you back in that battle, and saw you fight in the same way."

He avoided the sword frustratingly easily and grabbed Crowley's arm holding the sword, with tremendous force. Breaking free of that vice-like grip was out of question. Crowley's other hand thrust forward, aiming for Ferid's eyeballs.

Ferid didn't attempt to dodge. "Alright, I will be nice enough to allow you that."

Crowley's fingers plunged into the vampire's eyeballs. With a squelching sound, the fingers curled to gouge the orbs out.

But Ferid still only laughed. Continuing to giggle, with deliberate slowness he grabbed Crowley's other hand that was gouging out his eyes, then pushed it back. Even though Crowley jabbed at those damn orbs with all his might, by the time his fingers were extracted, the vampire's eyes had already regenerated.

And those pretty, deep crimson hues stared at Crowley gleefully. "Your face is all red, you know. Could it be that pushing your fingers in someone's eyes gets you turned on? What a pervert."

The next instance, terrifying force made Crowley drop to his knees to the floor. No matter how much he tried to push back, he couldn't even budge.

He couldn't win this, this much was absolutely certain.

Looking up at Ferid, Crowley said, "...Ferid-kun."

"Yeees?"

"I've got something to ask of you."

"I'm listening."

"...I admit defeat. Do what you will with my life."

"Hmph."

"So can you please spare my comrades who are about to come in here?"

"The Templars, you mean?"

"Precisely."

"But you are not a Templar Knight anymore. You said it yourself, remember?"

"...Please, Ferid-kun."

But Ferid grinned even broader at that. "Come to think of it, when I killed Gilbert-kun, he, too, said the same thing. Please spare my comrades, he asked. His blood was delicious," Ferid revealed.

When he killed Gilbert, he said...

The one who killed Gilbert was this monster. Not a conspiracy by the other Templar Knights. This creature killed Gilbert. Yet, what had he done. What had he done going and killing his fellow knights.

"You fuckeeeeer!!!"

Crowley strained his arms to the limit. Like before, it changed nothing, and he still couldn't move a finger. But he was already beyond caring. He tensed the muscles in his whole body. With a dry crack his right arm snapped. He couldn't care less about it. Breaking out of the vampire's hold was the only thing on Crowley's mind, even if he had to tear off his own arms for that.

And then he would kill him. He would kill this vampire.

Ferid's next comment was happily-sounding, "Haha, it looks to me that you are plenty obsessed with me already." "...kill. I'll kill you."

Ferid went on, "Well, no need to be so angry. It is not like I lied to you about everything. The conspiracy within the Order did take place. Gilbert-kun would have been killed sooner or later anyway. The ringleaders behind the conspiracy did plan to set Nald Vine up for his murder. I just happened to speed it up a little, is all."

But Crowley didn't listen anymore. Every word falling out this monster's mouth was a lie anyway. There was not an ounce of truth in what he was saying.

"If anything, those schemers laughed and cheered saying that one of them got impatient and stole a march on the rest killing Gilbert-kun first. So don't worry, it is not like you killed guiltless comrades. But oh well, you did not protect anyone either though."

Crowley jerked and struggled with all he was worth, feeling the flesh and the tendons in his right arm getting ripped and torn.

He was furious at himself. That he was foolish enough to believe this monster even for a second. No, that he abandoned Gilbert, that he ran away from the Knights Templar.

If only he hadn't run away, nothing of this would have happened. If only he hadn't lost God. This was his punishment. He was sure of it.

Eyeing Crowley's torn up shoulder, Ferid furrowed his eyebrows. "Doesn't it hurt?"

"I'll kill you."

"How, pray tell? No weapon is effective against vampires unless it is made out of silver. You can cut me with a sword, or cleave me with an axe, but as long as it's not silver, I will not die. And you do not have a weapon made out of silver on you, do you?" Ferid remarked.

Silver. If a weapon was made out of silver, it would work, the creature said.

Crowley had a feeling that he did hear something like this before, himself, too. He couldn't remember where he heard it exactly, whether it was from a fairy tale he knew when he was little, or from a drunken silly talk in a tavern, but it appeared that monsters prowling the night could only be killed by silver weapons.

Crowley still glared hatred at Ferid, but stopped straining.

To that, Ferid tilted his head questioningly, "What? No more struggling?"

"I can't win against you anyway."

"Well, that's a pity. Killing an unresisting prey does not excite me."

"Then let me run away."

"No can do."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"I'll devour you."

With that, Crowley was pushed to the floor. His hands were released, and his shoulders were grabbed on instead. From between Ferid's crimson lips, sharp fangs sprouted. Those fangs drew close to Crowley's neck.

This would be a second time when Crowley's blood was sucked by a vampire. Crowley had experienced it in that war once. An eerie kind of pleasure was found in having one's blood sucked out, and Crowley knew it. The mixture of fear of dying and overwhelming pleasure forced all thought to a complete halt. That's why Crowley needed to brace himself for that pleasure - the pleasure that literally numbed the brain.

He needed to not let himself be swept by it, because—

"..."

—he hadn't given up yet.

Ferid said into his neck, "Time for a meal~" The fangs pierced into the flesh of Crowley's throat.

At the same time, Crowley sneaked his left hand into Ferid's breast pocket. He was sure he would find the needle inside. The needle that the killed chaser made out of silver.

A silver weapon that could kill vampires...

Ferid started sucking at Crowley's neck strongly. The sounds of suction and squelching filled the room.

Crowley's blood, and life along with it, was being sucked out. Death was drawing near. The world was slowly sinking into dark before Crowley's eyes. And that mind-numbing pleasure penetrated his whole body.

"Agh... uh... ah," groans fell out of his mouth.

The pleasure was such that it almost made him think that he wouldn't mind being killed like this. But still, he willed the muscles in his left hand to tense up. His fingers wrapped tightly around the silver needle.

He only had one chance. If he messed it up, there simply wouldn't be enough strength left in him anymore to kill Ferid. That's why he visualized the motion in his mind and replayed it 3 times: how he would take out the needle from the pocket and drive it into Ferid's neck.

He could do it. At least he thought he could. Ferid lost himself to sucking his blood. Or so he thought, anyway.

He let his body tremble as if surrendering to the pleasure, and took out the silver needle out of Ferid's pocket. Not wasting a moment, he drove it into Ferid's neck.

All of it happened in an instance. The silver needle easily penetrated into the flesh.

"...Eh?" Ferid let out in a sound of surprise.

Crowley didn't let up, pushing and driving the needle through the side of the neck into the stem of Ferid's brain.

A mere heartbeat later, Ferid jumped back from him. Putting a hand to his neck, he inquired angrily, "Y-You, what did you...?"

Glaring at Crowley, he pulled out the silver needle lodged in his neck. "S-Silver?! Is this silver?! And you stabbed me with i— Ughaaaaaa?!" The bloodsucker screamed. Holding his neck, he writhed on the floor, seemingly in a lot of pain.

It looked like it really worked then. Hearing that ear-splitting screaming, Crowley tried to laugh.

"..." Except no voice came out, and he had no strength left to even attempt to say anything. Too much of his blood had been sucked out. He was very likely going to die, he knew. He couldn't even move his undamaged arm anymore. Couldn't touch the rosary on his chest.

Despite that, somehow he had a thought that at the last moment, God did smile upon him. That at the end, He granted Crowley the strength to kill the dangerous monster.

Suddenly, he remembered the words Roy Rouland said to him. '*There is a reason for everything, and we all let live in accordance with God's will.*'

If there really was a reason for why Gilbert died, why Victor had been killed and why Crowley himself was let live until now, was he able to fulfil God's will in the end?

"..."

His eyes stared at the vampire rolling across the floor in pain, while his mind was entertaining these thoughts.

"Ghwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!! Ferid shrieked. "Curse you, humaaaaan!!! Just when it was almost over, you went and did thiiiiis!!!" he kept screaming hatefully. "And sticking it where it huuuuuuurts—"

But abruptly, Ferid stopped his screaming fit, and lifted his head. His face was adorned with a smirk. And then...

"Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy, to think that at the last moment when you are cornered enough you would actually fall for such a transparent lie that would not even trick a child; you really must have a lot of trust in me, huh. You are really making me blush here. Thank you," Ferid goaded gleefully.

With a movement, light and flamboyant as that of a dancer, he stood up.

Silver weapons didn't work. The monster wasn't dead. But he himself was going to die, Crowley knew. Just die, meaninglessly and without accomplishing anything.

"..."

Ferid came closer, looking happy as ever, and squatted down next to Crowley's collapsed form. Peering into his face, the vampire touched the rosary on his chest.

"Aah, but do not hate God. He is a busy person, you see."

This man was completely impossible, playing to the end. He wore such an expression on his face that left no doubt that he had perfectly foreseen and anticipated everything.

But this would be the last Crowley would have to bear seeing that face. His consciousness was growing hazy.

Death, and darkness was closing in on him. He wondered idly if someone like him would be able to go to the Lord's side.

Ferid spoke up, "Aah, you are dying. And here I really enjoyed spending time with you. Human life is such a transient thing, isn't it." He actually looked a little regretful when he said that.

Then he moved his face even closer to Crowley's. "How is it? Do you hate me? Still want to kill me?"

"..."

"Is your heart burning with the hot desire for revenge?"

"..."

"I'm going to kill even more of your comrades after this. Furthermore, I will go back to the town and kill everyone you—" Ferid stopped abruptly. He looked entranced. "The spark returned to your eyes. You are feeling a thirst for life, I can tell. You still want to live. To live and take revenge, is what written all over your face. Fufufu, a face that says that you are thinking only of me."

"..."

"I shall give it to you. The strength that you desire from the bottom of your heart, I shall grant it to you—"

With this, Ferid took something like a transparent vial out of his breast pocket. Some sort of liquid sloshed inside of it. Shaking the vial a couple of times, he forcibly poured the liquid into Crowley's mouth.

The same instance Crowley knew that that unknown something entered his body. He felt the liquid travel down his throat. Felt it invade his esophagus, his stomach, his intestines, his very cells. His heart pounded heavily. Its rate accelerated, faster and faster, beating so rapidly that it hurt.

At the same time, "Ugh, ah!" he found his voice, even though there wasn't supposed to be any strength left in his body.

"Wh-What did you do to me?" Crowley demanded, focusing his eyes on Ferid.

Ferid laughed.

"What did you do to me?!"

His heart kept pulsating heavily and wildly. The strength and speed of its pounding was insane, so fast and strong that it could leap out of Crowley's chest any moment. And then, with one final powerful thud, Crowley's heart stopped. He felt it.

All the bloodflow in his body had stopped. Work of the internal organs had suspended. The spark of life was going out.

He was dead. He had died. And yet, Crowley was strangely aware of the fact that he had died.

"Ugh, agh..."

Dread seized him. The violent mortal dread of living despite having died.

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaah?!" He let out a piercing scream.

His flesh, contaminated with unknown something, was changing. He felt the pain of it. The pain of becoming a monster.

Even though his heart wasn't beating, he felt pain so intense like he had never felt before.

"Agh, ghah, agh....uaagh, aaaaagh!"

"...Now, now, does it hurt? But this is the last time you are able to feel pain that acutely, so make sure to savor it."

"Uaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

"But well, you will lose consciousness soon. You will sleep for a while, and when you wake up, everything will have changed for you. Once awake, chase after me. After the one you must extract revenge upon. After the one who killed the people you held dear, the one you hate—"

Just as Ferid was speechifying, a chorus of other voices reached Crowley's ears. The Templar Knights came before the door to this big room. His former comrades had come here.

"...D-Don't..." Crowley begged. "Please don't," he pleaded.

But Ferid only laughed.

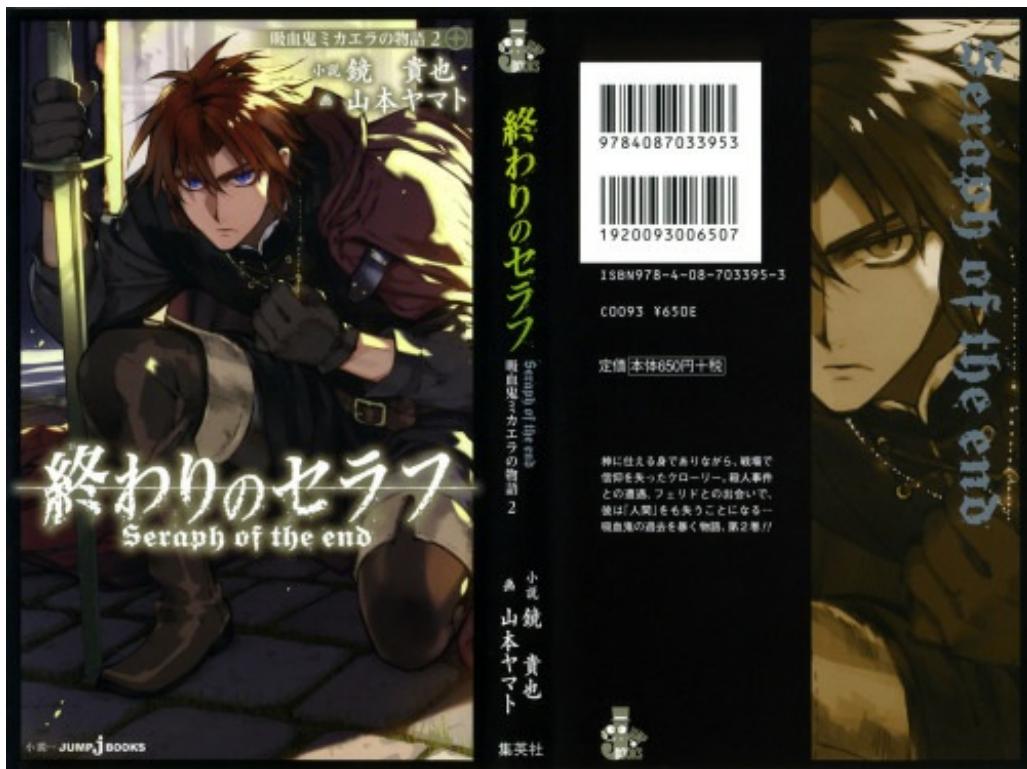
Just then, Crowley's consciousness started growing hazy again. His brain was dying. The part of him that tried to remain human was dying. He felt it.

He was about to turn into something else. Something that was not human. Something abominable. Something completely diffe—

But that was where Crowley finally lost consciousness.

CHILLY TERRITORY

 chilly-territory.tumblr.com/post/144659393735/seraph-of-the-end-the-story-of-vampire-michaela



Crowley has upgraded from SD to UHD, but it came with a catch... and the last part was terribly tearjerky.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 3 (part 4/5) (volume 2, pages 154-174)

◆◆◆

When Crowley came to, it was already evening.

"..."

He sat up slowly. He was supposed to be on the verge of dying, yet inexplicably, right now his body felt light as a feather.

He took a look around. No light was lit. Outside the window, it was raining, the sky was completely covered with thick black clouds, and moonlight couldn't make it through them.

There was hardly any light source to speak of around. A normal human would probably be unable to see anything under these circumstances. Yet, for some reason, he was able to make out his surroundings with astounding clarity. He could see through the night, could see everything in the dark room like it was midday.

No, not quite like that: the very image his eyes now perceived was different from how he saw the same things before.

His vision showed him the subtle hues of the world with clarity. The shades of darkness, the sweep of the wind... he could see the beauty of the nature in its full splendor with clarity that wasn't available to him before. The scenery of

an ordinary evening no different from any other had become so beautiful to his eyes that he would probably tremble from being deeply moved and maybe even shed a tear or two if he was shown this sight before.

Yet right now, even faced with this beauty, he...

"...I don't feel anything," Crowley whispered barely audibly.

His right hand touched the rosary on his chest. And from that, he knew. Knew that the heart in his chest wasn't beating.

It seemed that his hearing had also become highly sensitive. If he concentrated hard enough, he could hear insects crawling and rats running in the depths of this mansion.

But no matter how much he strained his ears, he couldn't hear the pulse and the flow of his own blood.

There was only thirst inside. Only terrible thirst. But what he was so thirsty for, he didn't know.

But he was. He was thirsty. So thirsty.

"..."

Crowley stood up and tried to flex his body to see how it would move. Come to think of it, his right shoulder was supposed to be fractured, and the tendons torn. But right now it moved just fine, as if nothing had happened. Crowley touched his neck. There were supposed to be wounds on the side of it where Ferid had bitten him, but he found none.

All his injuries had mended themselves like it was with the vampires.

"...Have I become a vampire?"

If so, then the thirst he felt was the thirst for blood.

The instance the thought about blood crossed his mind, he felt a wave of thirst flood him so strong that it almost made his whole body tremble. Tasting blood would grant him a lot of pleasure. He knew it instinctively.

Lifting his head, he took in his surroundings. He was in Nald Vine's residence. Plenty of barrels were left lined up against the wall. They contained blood, he knew. But he didn't find that blood appetizing. So it looked like he couldn't drink spoilt blood.

At the entrance to the room, dead bodies were piled up. The corpses of the Templar Knights who barged in here. There was more than 20 of them. Their heads and limbs were haphazardly severed off.

Crowley knew most of their faces. They were his former comrades.

He gazed at them.

The comrades that had managed to survive and return home alive from that war despite the odds, yet Gilbert had to struggle against an internal conspiracy and in the end got killed without any honor in this middle of nowhere place by a monster.

Just how ironic and pointless this was. When the real evil monster had finally made his entrance, it turned out that no righteous justice could be found on the human side either.

Crowley stared at the faces of his comrades warped in mortal terror. The death mask twisting their features was the same as the one on dead Gilbert's visage.

"...Do you want me to avenge you?" Crowley asked, eyeing those faces with despair engraved into them. "Do you want me to take revenge on that monster?"

No reply came. Of course it wouldn't. They all were dead.

And Crowley was to blame for their deaths. They all got killed because he had been marked by a bizarre monster. He had no idea why, but it appeared that Ferid intended to kill everyone who Crowley associated with.

If so, then...

"...Damn! Jose and Marlon are also in danger," Crowley muttered, frown settling over his features. It may have been too late already.

Crowley squatted, took a sword from the waist of one of his dead comrades and strapped it to his own hip.

Then he glanced towards the window. The downpour outside showed no signs of letting up anytime soon. But right now, he felt like he could dodge every single raindrop that fell from the heavens above. With that much power, it may have been possible for him to take on that creature.

Revenge. Time to exterminate that monster.

"...Except I'm a monster unloved by God myself now."

Yes, this was just too ironic.

♦♦♦

Crowley returned to his home late at night. Even though it was deep night, Marlon was nowhere to be found.

"Marlon! Are you there?"

No one answered.

"What about you, Jose?"

Again, no reply.

Crowley exited his house and headed towards Ferid's mansion. He reached it in no time.

He was capable of running faster than any horse or even the wind, and it was like he raced right through the sky. He wasn't human anymore. Just an unsightly vampire.

And he was thirsty. Extremely thirsty.

"Ferid Bathory!"

He struck the gate of the residence once with force, then entered. Inside, the mansion was completely empty. No boys and girls in those obscene clothes could be found there anymore.

Crowley only found Jose, put to sleep and lying on the dining table in the spacious hall where the two of them drank wine before.

At first, he thought Jose had been killed. But then he heard the beating of Jose's heart. The sound of the boy's blood flowing through his body. The sound of blood. The delicious sound of blood.

He knew his throat worked in a gulping motion. His body craved blood.

Not enough blood. The lust for it was overwhelming. He wouldn't be able to stay sane if he didn't drink it.

His field of vision narrowed. Suddenly, he realized that his eyes were fixed only on Jose's white throat, like he was a predator watching his prey.

"..."

Just then, a voice sounded, "You should drink, too." It came from the back of this spacious room. It was Ferid's voice.

Ferid's arm was wrapped around Marlon's form. Blood was trickling down Marlon's neck. The vampire had drunk it. Drunk the boy's blood. Marlon's face showed an ecstatic expression. Except that it was pallid and had lost all life it once held.

"...Did you kill him?" Crowley asked shortly, and Ferid smirked and flung Marlon's body to the floor carelessly.

"The blood tastes its most delicious when you drink them dead. You will kill someone very soon, too."

"Yeah, I'll kill you."

Ferid spread his arms to the sides in amusement. "And what will you do then? Is that your justice?"

"There will be one less monster in this world."

"True, I suppose, considering that the head count has just gotten increased by one. Well, allow me to welcome you, Crowley-kun, to the world of vampires."

Crowley put his hand on the handle of the sword.

Ferid laughed. "I hope that sword made of silver?"

The bastard was mocking him.

Fixing Ferid with a deathglare, Crowley spat out, "Silver doesn't work on vampires."

"Haha. But sunlight does. If you are bathed in it, you will die. That's why you will need this ring. With it, you will become a vampire that prowls the day." With this, he threw a bracelet-like thing towards Crowley's feet.

The ring bounced off the floor. Once. Twice. On the third hop, Crowley leaped off the floor. Drawing his sword, he brought it down straight on Ferid's neck without a pause.

"Oops, you're fast." The relaxed nonchalant expression vanished from Ferid's face. He took a step back. Crowley could follow his movements with his eyes now.

Retreating a step, Ferid kicked off the floor, jumping towards the ceiling. Landing there, he watched Crowley from his position on the ceiling.

Crowley thrust his sword up and at his face. Ferid's hand caught the sword. He was about to break it. But Crowley wasn't going to let him. Sliding the blade down, he tried to cut off Ferid's fingers.

But then, "Ah, not the most stellar idea," Ferid laughed as his fingers got severed off. Two of them sailed through the space. But that was all it did. Ferid's other hand lashed out, striking Crowley in the face.

"Ghah!"

The impact was tremendous. A human would have been turned into mincemeat. Crowley's feet sunk into the floor. He found himself instantly unable to move.

"Shit!"

He tried to get out somehow, but just then his sword was snatched away by Ferid, who gave a slanting swing with it from Crowley's shoulder and through his torso.

A strangely sounding shwip noise came from Crowley's body, and then, it dropped to the floor, cleaved in two. Crowley immediately found that all the sensations in his lower half were gone. To make it even worse, Ferid kicked at Crowley's upper half, sending it rolling across the floor.

And then, Ferid's voice came, "Lesson 1 for you, my dear newborn vampire. In a fight between two vampires, something like slicing off fingers is pointless. They can be reattached right away."

Picking up his own fingers, he stuck them back to their rightful place. In an instance, they mended back onto his hand.

"Something like this cannot be a fatal wound. Yours, on the other hand, is pretty much fatal. If you can stick your upper half onto your lower, they will reattach back together, except you cannot move like that, no?"

Slamming his remaining right arm into the floor, Crowley tried to drag his torso back to where his lower half was, only to be kicked by Ferid again.

"Not yet~ Listen to my generous lecture for a little while longer."

But Crowley had no composure to anymore. From his severed halves, blood was flowing out. And that made the thirst he felt even more unbearable. So much that he was on the verge of going mad.

Blood. Blood! Not enough blood!

"...Haa, haa, haa," he panted.

"Painful? I bet it is. The only thing we need is blood. If you do not drink it, you will not be able to preserve your sanity."

"...Haa, haa, haa."

"Without it, you will lose your mind and become an even more terrible monster - a demon, doomed to wander the depths of agony for all eternity. I do not recommend it. So make sure you drink blood. On the dining table, I prepared your share."

Crowley looked in the direction of the table. On top of it, food lay.

Jose. Jose was sleeping there.

Crowley's eyes fixed themselves upon the boy's throat. The carotid artery appeared to be showing through. As well as the blood flowing inside it. It was beautiful. The sight was very beautiful.

Ferid came closer. He peered into Crowley's face, studying the reactions. "How do you like the world of vampires?"

"Kill me."

"Fun, isn't it?"

"Please kill me."

"Sorry, but vampires cannot die. We are hated by God, you see. So we either go mad from living for too long and turn into demons, or just drag out an aimless existence for eternity to come. But since you have only just been turned, I shall give you a purpose."

With this, Ferid turned his back to Crowley.

But Crowley didn't hear what Ferid said after that. Blood. He needed blood. That was the only thought spinning in an endless loop in his head.

Crowley hardly noticed when Ferid left. Crawling across the floor using his one arm, Crowley grabbed his lower half. Once put to his torso, the lower half reattached itself in an instance. He could feel the lower half of his body again. But he couldn't care less about that at the moment.

He needed blood, overwhelmingly so.

His eyes darted back to Jose. If he could drink his blood...

"..."

But just then, Jose stirred and woke up. "...Mmn."

Crowley knew that the boy's eyes cracked open, and he looked Crowley's way, trying to make him out.

But Crowley didn't want to be seen. Not in this form. He didn't want the still pure squire who knew nothing yet to see him - someone who failed to protect his comrades, who killed them, and on top of all that ended up becoming a vampire.

That's why he ran away.

Sweeping the ring that was supposed to allow him to walk in daylight off the floor, he darted out of the mansion and into the dark.

He would extract revenge. On Ferid Bathory. He would kill the vampire who turned him into such a monster.

♦♦♦♦

After that, time passed quickly. 1 year. 5 years. 10 years.

He kept the count until 2 decades after, but eventually stopped, finding it absurd.

It turned out that he didn't age. His appearance didn't change at all. He perceived time differently now than when he was human. He hardly noticed days and nights revolve, and a year had passed before he even knew it.

He remembered the events from a few decades ago like they happened yesterday. But in reality, time flowed around him, cities and people grew, and the world was changing.

He was the only one that remained unchanged.

And he traveled all this time in order to extract revenge on Ferid Bathory. In his journeys, he came across a few vampires. It turned out that there was a fairly large number of vampires inhabiting the world.

He also learned that among vampires an hierarchy existed. As well as laws. Only those vampires who belonged to the so-called noble class were allowed to sire new vampires. He also learned that among them, the high ranking nobles, divided into 20 top ranks, possessed big power and authority.

The one to enlighten him about all of that was a vampire holding the pretentious rank of what he called "the 11th progenitor". Crowley forgot what his name was, but it appeared that the man had considerable confidence in himself. Besides him, in the dominion that he ruled over, there lived several more vampires who worshiped him.

This was what that vampire said, "A novice vampire like you who doesn't even know his master pointing a sword at me? What is the big idea? I'm the 11th progenitor, I'll have you know!"

The man said it with pomposity, like that alone explained everything. Except to Crowley, it explained nothing. Since he was a novice vampire and all. So Crowley just beheaded the man. Severing the head ensured that the body

wouldn't be able to move. And with it, the sunlight protection ring also came off. If left under the sun for a while in that state, even a vampire would die.

The 11th progenitor, having become nothing but a severed head, started yelling. Why are you possessing might of such magnitude, he demanded to know. A greenhorn vampire who doesn't even know anything about the world of vampires cannot possibly possess such power, he shrieked.

It seemed that a vampire's raw power was determined by who they got the blood from upon turning and by the number of years they had lived.

The man kept screaming, "Just who on earth is your master?!"

Crowley gave him the name of the man that turned himself into a vampire. And asked if the man knew where to find him. He asked this question every vampire he met in his journeys.

—*Do you know where to find Ferid Bathory?*

The 11th progenitor knew Ferid's name. But when he heard it, he went into another screaming fit. "Don't lie to me! It can't be him! Ferid-sama is the 7th progenitor. If the blood you were given had been that of a 7th rank, you would have only possessed the strength of no higher than a 13th rank at best!"

Crowley had no idea how that calculation worked, but in short, it meant that he was given power by a higher ranked vampire. And it had opened an insurmountable power gap from the get-go. The difference in power between the 11th rank and 13th rank was supposed to be quite substantial.

Except Crowley didn't feel threatened by the man's power in the slightest. If anything, he found the man to be painfully slow.

"Tell me the truth! Just who on earth are you?!"

But it wasn't like Crowley could provide an answer, because he himself was lost on that account the most.

Just what did Ferid do to him?

Meanwhile, the vampire, flooded with sunlight, turned to ashes.

Crowley was still alive.

♦♦♦

Crowley continued his wanders. He had no idea anymore how many days and nights had changed one another. All this time he vagabonded around the world, traversing continents and crossing oceans.

And wherever he went, everywhere humans were doing the same, killing each other; all for the sake of seizing power and influence. Their pretexts changed every now and then. And even the names of the Gods they believed in changed.

But the things they did stayed the same: screaming some kind of justice and killing someone in the name of it.

As to vampires, on the other hand...

Once in a few years Crowley would always come across a vampire, and whenever he met them, he would always find them doing absolutely nothing. They just existed, living out the days of their boring eternal life.

And he was the same. Had he not have the goal of pursuing Ferid, he might have lost his mind from those empty,

boring, never-ending days.

That's what he thought, anyway.

Lost in his thoughts, Crowley found himself walking through a battlefield.

Multitude of humans had met an atrocious end on it. Another conflict between those of different religion, ideology, skin color, justice...

In the past, Crowley, too, used to put his life on the line here. For the sake of protecting his comrades. For the sake of justice. For the sake of faith. But God never turned to him, perhaps because he didn't pray hard enough. He didn't know where justice was and whom it lay with. No, worse: by now, he viewed all the humans as food.

In the early afternoon of a gentle and cheerful day, a detached-looking vampire weaved his way through the countless human corpses.

It made for a bizarre sight, to be sure. Only humans could kill so many humans, and Crowley was not human anymore.

"..."

Walking for a while, he came across a middle-aged man, lying on the ground.

The man appeared to be in his forties. In his hand, he clutched a flag - a white cross on the red background, the flag of the Crusaders. This was a Crusade.

Crowley gazed down at the man who now had a lush mustache and still clutched the flagstaff in his fingers. It was him Crowley came here to see.

The man's abdomen was pierced with a sword, and he was about to die. Yet, he didn't abandon or let go of the flag. He was probably proud to carry the flag of the Crusaders.

The man looked up at Crowley and voiced feebly, "...Am I... dreaming?"

"..."

"How can... you be here, Crowley-sama...? Even though you... have disappeared all those... decades ago..."

"..."

"Aah, it must be... a dream... You look the same as... you did back... then, Crowley-sama..."

There, the man vomited blood. He went into a coughing fit, rapidly losing life. Despite that, the man's eyes were still fixed on Crowley, and he still made effort to speak with a look on his face that was a cross between tearful and happy.

"..."

"...Even if this is... a dream... Crowley-sama. Please listen to this. After you disappeared, I continued to practice, like you taught me..."

"..."

"I... persevered. 5 hours. Although sometimes I... skipped a day, I still did... it every day..." He spat out more blood.

Practicing was meaningless. Because eventually, humans would die anyway.

The man's pupils dilated. He probably couldn't see anymore. And yet, mustering the last of his strength, the man still forced out, "...Cro...wley-sama... W-Was I... Was I able... to become... a worthy kni..."

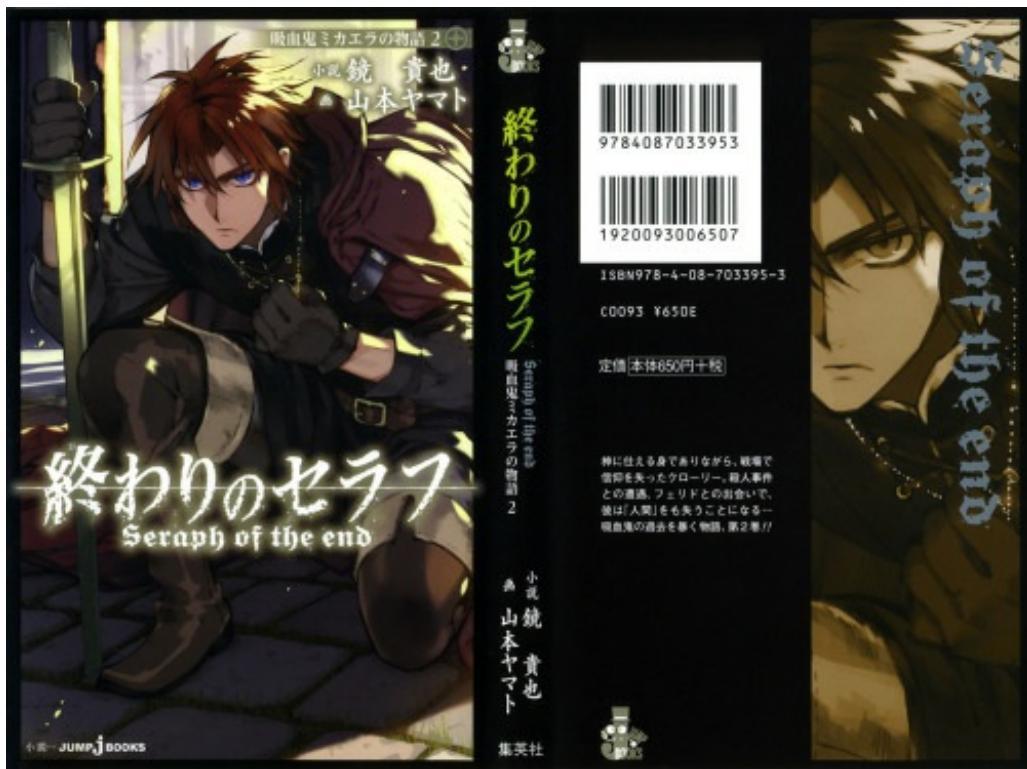
The man died, leaving the question unfinished.

Crowley gazed at him. At his dead body. Then, taking off the rosary of the man he considered the finest and worthiest knight of them all from his neck, he put it atop the man's body.

"At the very least, you died on a battlefield. You're a much, much worthier knight than the likes of me unable to even die anymore." Sweeping his hand to close the man's eyes, Crowley added, "So don't worry and rest in peace, Jose."

CHILLY TERRITORY

 chilly-territory.tumblr.com/post/144715620135/seraph-of-the-end-the-story-of-vampire-michaela



The last part of monstrously lengthy chapter 3. A lot of food for thought in here.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 3 (part 5/5) (volume 2, pages 174-196)

♦♦♦

A few decades had passed before Crowley finally managed to obtain information on Ferid.

It happened by chance. There was a brothel in a certain town of a certain continent. The rumor had it that the owner of that brothel was a wealthy pervert who gathered a lot of boys and girls there and made them wear obscene clothing.

Once he heard that, Crowley set out there. The first look at the mansion housing the brothel was enough to confirm that the owner was, indeed, Ferid. Because the mansion looked exactly like Ferid's mansion Crowley had seen before.

When he stepped in front of the front gate, he was received like his arrival had been expected. A half-naked girl in see-through clothes welcomed him, "Allow me to humbly welcome you, Crowley Eusford-sama. Master is waiting for you."

"And what's the name of that master of yours?" Crowley asked her.

"Ferid Bathory-sama."

So Crowley had finally reached him. He wondered exactly how long it had taken him.

He entered the mansion. The interior was mostly identical to what he remembered from the past. The country was different, and the architectural style differed somewhat, too, but Ferid's tastes remained the same: gaudy decor and good-looking men and women.

Come to think of it, Ferid said once before that he didn't sleep with them. At the time Crowley thought Ferid was jesting, but now he understood that Ferid told the truth. He didn't have sex with women, or men, anymore. Just drank them. Drank their blood.

Crowley went deeper into the mansion. There, he found a room that appeared to be something like a private study. And in it, behind a big tasteful wooden desk, the man himself was waiting for him.

His hair was long and silver, his eyes were red, and his skin was white. A broad grin that looked like it was glued on his face stretched his lips. Ferid Bathory, in flesh.

It had been several decades since Crowley last saw him, yet the man's appearance didn't change any. He still looked like a man in his twenties.

Watching Crowley, Ferid said, "Hello~ It has been a while. Who were you, again?"

"You don't remember?" Crowley asked in reply.

"No. Not at all."

"Really. Well, that's strange then. Because one of your servants called me by the name at the front gate."

"Oh, did they?"

"Yeah. You've been waiting for me, no?"

Ferid smiled. "Well, maybe. I do not have many friends, you see."

"I'm not your friend."

"Ehh? Then why did you come?"

"To kill you."

"Heeh. Can you, though?"

"I've lived long enough. And gotten somewhat stronger."

With that, Crowley rested his hand on the sword strapped to his hip. That sword was something that he stole from that man that called himself the 11th progenitor. It sucked the vampire blood, boosting the wielder's physical ability.

Taking in the sword, Ferid commented, "Only nobles have that kind of swords. Where did you get it?"

"Killed the owner and stole it," Crowley replied.

"Kyaa, manslayer!"

"Vampireslayer."

"But you've killed humans, too, no? You could not have remained sane if you had not drunk blood. So, tell me, the blood of just how many humans have you sucked to date?"

Crowley couldn't answer that because he had survived by sucking the blood of countless humans, and by now it was so many that he didn't know the number. He had been a vampire for more than 50 years now. No matter how he resisted and tried to control himself, once in 3 days he got so thirsty for blood that he would literally start going crazy.

So Crowley kept his silence, and seeing that, Ferid then asked his next question, "And how many of them have you drained to death, unable to resist?"

"..."

"You're not going to tell me that you haven't killed a single one yet by sucking them dry, are you. Vampires just cannot resist that urge. Reason gets thrown out the window when there is blood in front of us."

"..."

Ferid grinned. His face said he knew the answer already.

And it was like he said. In those several decades, Crowley killed more than a few people. His body demanded it. And that desire was irresistible. At first, he would be assaulted by feelings of guilt, but gradually that emotion faded.

Not, not just that emotion: he was losing the minute gradations of other emotions, too, like love, anger, sorrow that he felt back when he was human. And soon, he stopped feeling much of anything when sucking human blood. That process got accelerated after he had watched Jose die. He didn't have any acquaintances among humans anymore, and they all started to look only like food to him.

Ferid spoke up, "...So, why did you come here today, again?"

Why indeed, Crowley wondered. The memory was hazy. He had lived as a vampire for too long.

Still, Crowley answered, unsheathing the sword, "For revenge."

"Revenge for what?"

"..."

"For turning you into a vampire? Or because you're angry about your precious comrades getting killed?"

"..."

"By the way, do you remember their names? The names of those comrades of yours from the past?"

Of course Crowley remembered. Victor. Gilbert. Gustavo. Roy. Commander Alfred.

But Ferid went on with a chuckle, "...What about their faces?"

"..."

"Can you recall their faces? Can you still remember the faces of each of the livestock you suck the blood of day after day?"

"..."

"You cannot, I bet. Time is a terrifying thing. With its passage, one forgets everything that is not important. But important things can be remembered. And what is it that you always remembered?" Ferid inquired gleefully. "I shall tell you: my face. Day after day, you only thought of me, right? Because that was the only purpose y—"

"I'll kill you and end it today," Crowley cut him off.

He swung his sword straight at Ferid. But Ferid didn't react. He could behead Ferid, Crowley knew. The point of the sword plunged into Ferid's neck, transmitting the sensation of soft flesh as it did. But that's where Crowley stopped the sword's momentum.

"Why aren't you dodging?"

Looking up at him, Ferid answered the question with a question, "And why are you not lopping off my head?"

"..."

"Oh well, I know why anyway. Because you have no reason to anymore. You remembered me, but you were not able to remember the reason why you wanted to kill me."

"..."

"You do not possess the strong emotions that you had at the beginning. The only thing that can move your heart now is blood. You have become a vampire through and through."

That was right. He had become a vampire. Then, for what was he still fighting?

Crowley withdrew the sword and let it drop to the floor. With a small sigh, he said, "...Dammit, Ferid-kun, what the hell. I'm tired."

"Hahaha."

"What's your angle?"

"As in?"

"Why did you choose me to turn into a vampire?"

When asked that, Ferid sat back down in a chair before answering, "I wanted a friend."

Crowley didn't know anymore if the other man was jesting or being serious when he said that. But if, by any chance, that was true, nothing could have been more terrifying.

So he asked, "Say, Ferid-kun."

"Hm?"

"You're a noble, right?"

"Yes, I am," Ferid nodded easily.

Crowley continued, "I heard that nobles are allowed to spread the curse by giving their blood."

"Who did you hear that from?"

"Who was it, again... the 11th progenitor? That's how he introduced himself, I think?"

Ferid shrugged his shoulders. "Well, there are 11 vampires holding the 11th rank, you see."

"Oh really? Then how many are there the 12th ones?"

"12."

"And the 5th ones?"

"5."

"Hmph. That's how it works, huh."

In other words, in total there were 210 high ranking vampires holding the ranks up to the 20th. Crowley didn't know if that was many or few, but few was more likely, considering that they were dispersed all around the world. But then again, even with so few of those who could turn someone into a vampire with their blood, the number of vampires could grow indefinitely, Crowley felt, so how was it being controlled and curbed? And why was the number of those who could spawn off new vampires limited in the first place?

Crowley had a lot of questions to ask, but right now, what he should have been asking was...

Crowley went back on topic. "Anyway, I heard from that 11th progenitor guy that only nobles are allowed to turn someone into a vampire."

"That is correct."

"You're a noble."

"Also correct."

"Then, you could have made me drink your blood to turn me into a vampire."

"Yes, I could have."

"Yet, that wasn't what you did. Instead, you made me drink blood from some suspicious vial. So just whose blood was it?"

Ferid didn't answer, just grinned so broadly that his face risked splitting in two.

Crowley went on, "At the very least, it was the blood of a pretty high ranking vampire. I was told that if I had drunk your blood, I myself would have been ranked at the 13th rank or lower. Except my power—"

"Was far outmatching that of the 11th rank?"

"...It was like fighting a child. So whose blood was it that you gave me?"

But Ferid still didn't feel like answering, just continuing to grin broadly. So Crowley changed the angle of his question.

"Why didn't you just give me your blood?"

And that, Ferid finally answered, "I'm not morbid enough to spread my own curse."

"You still turned me into a vampire though."

"But not with my own blood."

"I can't die because of what you did, so it's all the same."

"Haha, you did not live nearly long enough just yet to feel the despair of being unable to die, yet look at you sounding like the oldest of us."

Crowley ignored the dig and continued, "You turned me into a vampire. Spill the reason."

Gazing at him, Ferid said, "But I just did."

Was he talking about that bullshit of wanting to have a friend?

"Don't expect me to believe in such nons—"

But Ferid cut him off, "It is not nonsense. Vampires give their blood to the humans they like to leave them by their side."

"..."

"Because we are bored out of our minds, you see. For decades, for centuries, vampires have more time on our hands that we know what do with and more hopelessness that we can handle. Humans we loved in the past pass away in no time at all, and we cannot even remember their faces after a while. Cities we loved in the past change so completely that they look like a scenery from another world. The only things that do not change are boredom and hopelessness. That's when you cannot help but wish to have a companion at your side to share the despair with."

"..."

"And so, you share your blood with the human you took a liking to - or even think you might fall in love with. Granting the curse of being unable to die to the one you think you love, dragging them into the same hell with you. And what do you think the result is?"

"..."

"Even more despair. Boredom never alleviates. And in addition, the one you gave your blood to becomes a vampire far weaker and far dumber than you. You are a master and a servant. Not equals. Furthermore, the servant is disgruntled with the master. Why did you doom me to this eternal suffering, they implore. Please kill me, they beg. Please undo this curse somehow."

Listening to that spiel, Crowley studied Ferid's expression, then asked, "Are you speaking from personal experience? Is that what happened to you in the past, when you loved someone and gave them your blood?"

But again, Ferid didn't answer, only smiling at the question.

"Or could it be that you were loved by someone, but came to hate them?"

"It is just a generalization."

"For all the vampires?"

"Yes."

"Alright, so, what do we have then? You gave me the blood of a high ranking vampire. And the reason is that you wanted for us to be not a master and a servant but equals, is this what you're saying?"

To those words, Ferid nodded with a very exaggerated gesture. "Have you finally come to understand the magnitude of my friendship?" he asked.

Crowley made a face before informing him, "I don't trust you. At all."

"Hahaha."

"And why did you choose me?"

"Because of your pretty face, perhaps?"

Well, that was a definite lie. The guy wasn't nearly simple enough for that.

Ferid stood up, saying, "Well then, now that you have become my real friend..."

"Friends don't keep secrets from each other though."

Ferid ignored Crowley's remark, continuing, "...first, let's introduce you to the world of vampires. Ah, by the way, we will say that you got turned into a vampire with my blood, so you will play the part of only a 13th progenitor, and do remember to be careful about it."

Well, here came. As expected, like hell Crowley's face had anything to do with why Ferid chose him. Not when the man kept countless secrets and had hidden agendas everywhere.

Regarding Ferid with wary eyes, Crowley asked, "...And why is there a need to lie like that?"

Ferid returned the stare, answering mirthfully, "Actually, if it is found out that I turned someone into a vampire with stolen blood, you and I both will be imprisoned for all eternity."

"Wha..?!"

"We will be immured into stone, but we will not be able to die. The functions of the brain will keep regenerating, so we will not be able to lose our minds either. And this worst torture existing in this world will be continuing forever. The one who came up with this torture is quite incredible, don't you agree?"

"No, hold on a second. You went and dragged into something as dangerous as that?"

"Yup. Sorry."

"I have no use for your remorseless apologies..."

Ferid went on, unperturbed, "Well, it just means that we are already partners in crime. Besides, hiding how strong you actually are may be rather convenient for when there is a need to kill someone. When they hear that you only hold the 13th rank, higher ranking progenitors will severely underestimate you."

Crowley glared at Ferid, "...So that's your objective, huh? Is that how your revenge story goes?"

But Ferid laughed, "No, no, this is how my time killing story goes."

Standing up and leaving the table, Ferid ordered a servant to bring him a coat and a sword. When the servant came back, he carried a coat and a sword that was on the shorter side and adorned with lovely ornaments.

This was Crowley's first time seeing Ferid with a sword. In all likelihood, that sword was a weapon made specifically for vampires. The kind that boosted the vampire wielder's physical ability by sucking their blood.

"Say, Ferid-kun," Crowley inquired.

"Yees, Crowley-kun?"

"Do you really think I'll just obediently follow you?"

"Yes, I do. Because you have nothing better to do, wrong?"

Well, that was true. To make it even worse, Crowley found himself in a very precarious situation where he would be imprisoned for all eternity to come if anyone ever found out just how he had become a vampire. He needed information. The information to survive.

"Say, Ferid-kun."

"What is it, Crowley-kun?"

"Tell me since when did you target me?"

Ferid answered with surprising ease while being helped to put on the coat by the servant, "Since a little more than 150 years prior, I believe."

That was long before Crowley was even born into this world. Not even his parents were born at the time. It was the time when his great-grandparents were only children themselves. In other words, he had been marked by such a monster long before he was even brought into this world.

"Good grief, liked me for the face my foot. I wasn't even born at the time."

"Haha. I had fun imagining what kind of face my sibling would have."

Sibling, Ferid said. In other words...

"...That blood that you made me drink was the blood of the one who turned you into a vampire, then?"

Ferid grinned. Affirmative, then.

"So, what rank does that person hold?"

"Curious about our papa?"

"So it's a male, since you call him 'papa'."

"Oh, you're pretty smart," Ferid remarked, pointing a finger at Crowley.

"Mocking me, aren't you?"

"No, I'm not."

"So, who's that papa, anyway?"

Ferid finally deigned to answer, "A second progenitor."

That was a really high stature. Crowley didn't know much about the vampire ranking order, but he was sure beyond doubt that the smaller the number was, the higher the rank it indicated.

"What is his name?"

"He changes his name often. And in the first place, he had disappeared from the vampire world quite some time ago. According to the information I got a hold of, he's infiltrated a certain human organization in a Far East island country and is calling himself Saitou now..." Ferid said, sounding just a tiniest bit troubled.

Crowley had a feeling he heard the name "Saitou" somewhere, himself, too.

"Is he the one you want to extract revenge on?"

"Have I ever said that I wanted revenge?"

"You don't? Then what? What you want my help with?"

Narrowing his eyes, Ferid tossed a look at Crowley. "You are not strong enough yet to help me with anything. First you need to live long enough and learn more about the world of vampires."

"A postponement until then, huh?"

"Yup."

"But we share the same parent, aren't we."

"That's right."

"In which case, my power should already..." And there, Crowley made his move.

Picking up his sword from the floor in a flash, he brought it down on Ferid in a straight line. Ferid, too, drew the sword from the sheath hanging at his waist. The two blades clashed.

And just from that Crowley understood that Ferid's movements were those of someone who had been through high level sword training. Where did he learn, Crowley wondered. It was a style that Crowley had never seen before. But the movements were extremely refined. Like some sort of ceremonial fencing taught to royalty. In any case, it was clear that Ferid was no stranger to swordplay. And his level of proficiency in it was higher than Crowley's own.

Crowley swung his sword again. Ferid, looking unfazed, asked, countering and parrying strikes to the right, then the left, "How is it? Feel like you can win?"

"...Nope, I feel like I'll lose. So you know your way around the sword, too, I take it?"

"I have lived a pointlessly long life, you see."

"How long, exactly?"

"Loooong. Very long. And for vampires, their strength grows the longer they live."

"Then, does that mean that I won't ever be able to win against you?"

"I wonder. You have the talent. Even now, little by little, your blade is getting swifter and more cre—"

But just then Crowley struck with all of his might. The tip of his sword was on its way to Ferid's neck, but...

"Won't reach me~"

Crowley's sword arm was severed off and sent flying. But Crowley had foreseen it. He set it up so that Ferid's sword lopped off his arm. Taking a step forward, he said, "Not a fatal wound."

This was something he had learned from Ferid. In a fight between vampires, as long as it didn't rob off the opponent of their ability to move, cutting off parts of the body didn't count as a fatal wound.

Crowley rammed his right shoulder into Ferid, grabbing his head at the same time. He tried to twist off Ferid's head of his body, but Ferid only laughed, "...See? You can learn a few things from me, no?"

His head didn't budge. And not just that: Crowley felt Ferid grab him by the head and shoulder, and the next moment, his own head ended up being cut off.

"...Ugh!" For a fleeting moment, Crowley felt immense pain, and immediately after all sensations from his neck down disappeared.

Ferid held up Crowley's severed head and said, "Lesson 2. Attacking a stronger opponent head-on is not a good idea."

Blood was pouring out from Crowley's neck. The hunger he felt got abruptly exacerbated. Blood. Not enough blood.

Ignoring the alarm warning reverberating through his head, Crowley glared at Ferid from up above where Ferid held his head, "Damn monster."

"It is not very convincing when coming from a guy who is alive as nothing more than a severed head~"

"So in the end, I will never be able to win against you, huh?"

"You will. From now on, I will guide you so that you will become able to."

With that, Ferid held out his hand. But of course, Crowley couldn't take it. He was but a severed head at the moment. Needless to say, Ferid was perfectly aware of the fact, and that was why he made such a gesture in the first place. He was a truly awful guy. Crowley stared at Ferid's hand with a fed-up look, and Ferid finally returned Crowley's head to where the rest of his body was, but not before waving that hand of his annoyingly.

Crowley's head quickly rejoined his body. But that didn't make the thirst disappear. Because he had lost blood.

With a tired face, Crowley looked up at Ferid from the floor. "Ferid-kun."

"What is it?"

"I'm hungry."

Ferid grinned happily. "...Let's eat then. And then, let's travel together for a couple of centuries. Like true friends."

"..."

"By the way, Crowley-kun."

"What?"

"What do you want to eat? Meat? Fish? You also liked wine, didn't you?"

What a nasty guy, Crowley thought. Was it even possible to bear traveling with such a guy for a few centuries?

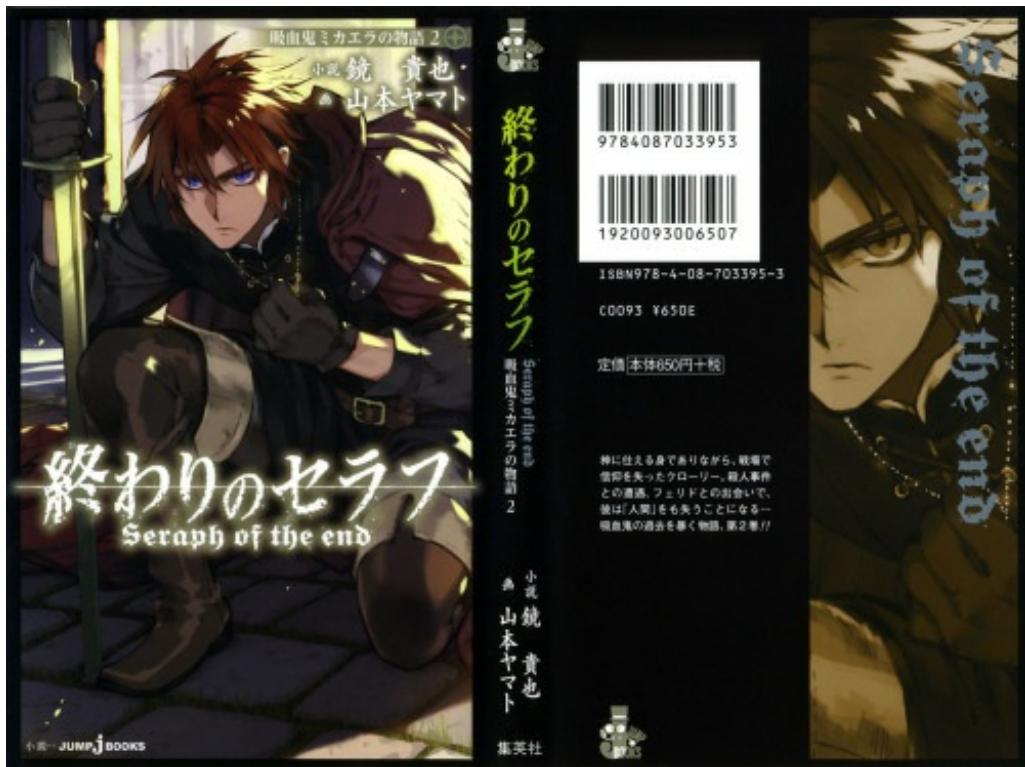
Crowley grimaced, "Make it blood."

Ferid laughed happily.

And then, the two set out on a long long journey.

CHILLY TERRITORY

 chilly-territory.tumblr.com/post/144817880890/s...eraph-of-the-end-the-story-of-vampire-michaela



The last chapter of volume 2. Only epilogue left now. And the afterword.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Chapter 4 (volume 2, pages 197-228)

Ferid's Battle

“...”

How many centuries had passed since then, Ferid wondered, turning over the memories in his mind as his gaze fell on Crowley Eusford sleeping in a coffin.

The coffin was located in Ferid's mansion, in the vampire city of Kyoto Sanguinem. Crowley wasn't in the coffin because he had died. He was a vampire and could not die anymore. No, he was already dead. Because he was hated by God, and his heart didn't beat. Then why did he sleep in a coffin?

Ferid didn't know who started it, but by the time Ferid himself became a vampire, vampires had already had a habit of sleeping in coffins, hiding from the light of the sun. And unexpectedly, sleeping like that turned out rather pleasant.

Physically speaking, vampires didn't need to sleep. But they still slept. To fill the time of the unimaginably long life they were forced to drag, they went to sleep in coffins. That way, they were able to forget everything for just a short while and lose consciousness. If only for a few short hours.

They could not rest for eternity.

It had been 7 hours since Crowley had gotten into the coffin. He would be waking up soon then.

“...”

In those 7 hours, Ferid had finally finished drawing his map. The map that would allow human children to escape from this vampire city.

The map turned out really splendid. Probably because Ferid got to listen to Crowley's reminiscences about his past. It reminded him that what he was doing now was all part of the plan hatched many centuries ago, and for it, right now, he needed to finish drawing that map. Because if he didn't, he would stop caring about everything in a flash.

It was always like that for Ferid. Even back when he was human. He would get tired of anything and everything in a heartbeat.

Leaving Crowley's coffin, Ferid headed to his own room. On the way, he came across a few of the children he favored and allowed visiting his mansion.

“Ah, Ferid-sama!” One of the boys noticed him. He was a pretty boy with black hair. His blood had a fresh, vibrant flavor. Ferid remembered his taste but forgot his name. His interest in the boy was rapidly fading. It was about time to kill him then.

Ferid smiled brilliantly in reply, “Oh, hello~”

“I can live in luxury every day thanks to you, Ferid-sama, sir!” The boy said with a smiling face.

“Really? That is good to hear. Tell me if there is anything else you need. I will get it for you.”

“Yes, sir!” The boy left then.

The next child to notice Ferid passing was a girl. She was about 14 and intelligent. Very. Ferid liked talking with bright kids. The look of despair on the faces of children who knew they were smart at the moment they were being killed was also an exquisite sight. But her name, Ferid had forgotten. Off with her, too, then.

“Ferid-sama.”

“Hello, hello~”

“It is unusual to see you walking around the mansion at this time of the day, sir.”

“Really? You remember my schedule then?”

“Yes, sir. Lately, you preferred secluding yourself in your study in the afternoon, sir.”

True. Since he was busy drawing the map. But this afternoon, he had finished it. And now that it was complete, it was time to start the next phase of the tale.

He left the map in his study, on a bookshelf. Children were not forbidden from entering his study, along with the rest of his mansion, but no one had ever tried. They understood that their life would be in danger if they entered the mansion's master's private room and ended up seeing something they were not supposed to lay their eyes on.

This girl wouldn't enter it either under any circumstances, Ferid was sure. Since she was smart.

Ferid addressed her, “By the way, is there something that you need?”

“No, sir.”

“If you find something, tell me.”

“I will, sir. Thank you very much, Ferid-sama.”

Ferid nodded and resumed walking.

His destination was his private study. In the hallway, he ran into another boy. A very clever and pretty boy. He was 12. His hair was blond, and his eyes were blue.

“Ah, Ferid-sama.”

Needless to say, Ferid remembered his name very well.

Watching that boy, Ferid greeted him, "Hello, Mikaela-kun. I see you came again."

"Yes, sir."

"I wanted to ask: has your life become comfortable since you started coming here?"

"Yes, thanks to you, Ferid-sa—" Mikaela started saying, putting on a bright smile on his face.

But just then, Ferid's hand reached out. Towards the boy's white neck.

"...Ah..." the boy let out a grunt, making a surprised expression for a moment, but it disappeared just as quickly as it appeared. The boy relaxed, not resisting in the least.

"Good boy."

Ferid's mouth opened, and his fangs pierced into the boy's neck. The suction noises followed as he sucked the boy's blood. The blood was warm and tasted of hope. Among all the children Ferid had at hand at the moment, this boy's blood was the most delicious.

Mikaela's body shook beneath that of the vampire.

If Ferid didn't stop soon, the boy would die. But stopping was a difficult task. The better the blood tasted, the stronger the desire to drink someone dry to death became.

"...Ah...Uhah..."

"..."

"Ugh... F-Ferid-sama..."

And here, Ferid finally took off his mouth of the boy. To do it, he had to exercise a degree of self-control so high that he even felt like praising himself for the effort.

But he knew for a fact that the more patience he had abstaining from doing something, the bigger the pleasure to be eventually gained would be. That was why he was able to pry himself off of Mika's neck. For the pleasure that waited for him in the future.

"Haa, haa, haa," Mika panted roughly, pressing a hand to his neck.

From the wounds on it, his blood trickled. Ferid's eyes fixed themselves on those rivulets, igniting bloodlust in him anew. It wasn't quite enough. But if he drank any more out of Mika, the boy wouldn't be able to move. That's why he didn't.

"Are you alright?" he asked instead, and Mika managed to plaster a smile across his exhausted face.

"I am, sir. Thank you."

"Hm? What are you thanking me for?"

"...For drinking my blood. Since I can only live the way I live now due to you favoring me, Ferid-sama."

Ferid knew that it was far from what the boy really thought. But the boy had no trouble voicing fluttery like that.

And that would advance this tale. Forward. Only forward.

"You are such a good boy."

"Thank you, sir."

"Alright then, you can leave now. If there is something you need..."

"Thank you for the kind offer, sir. But my life is already comfortable enough thanks to what can be found in the mansion."

"I see. Good to hear." Ferid turned his back to Mikaela.

Usually, this was where foolish children took off running. In order to escape. Because they all couldn't tolerate being livestock.

But Mika didn't leave. Ferid still felt his gaze fixed upon his person. As if the boy really was proud to be loved by his master - putting on an act. And that act of his was even more flawless than usual.

Tossing a glance behind him, Ferid saw that Mika, indeed, was still looking at him. Noticing Ferid's glance, the boy gave him a smile. As if to show as much as he could how happy he was to be loved. As if to tell that betrayal was the farthest thing from his mind. Mika smiled, like he was assuring the vampire that he didn't have anything to hide from him.

"...Hahaha." Ferid had to laugh mirthfully at that.

Now he was sure that Mika had found something. This smart and brave boy had found an item that would allow him to kiss goodbye to being livestock.

"..."

Ferid had returned to his study. The room was in perfect order.

Standing in front of his big antique desk, he carefully surveyed the room. Several bookshelves filled with multitude of old books could be seen from this spot. And Ferid knew perfectly what book could be found where and in what order they sat on the shelves.

This was another thing that was always like that for him ever since he was human - no, a child, even. His memory was far too good, and he memorized everything he was exposed to in no time. And that was the precise reason why he was always bored.

At a glance, nothing had changed about the bookshelves. Except the arrangement of all the books on one of them was a little off compared to how it was previously. And on that particular shelf, Ferid left a few articles of interest: things that would call forth an entertaining development if found by the children, to be exact, like weapons, keys to places of forbidden entry, and study papers on forbidden magic.

Only, till now, there wasn't a single child who tried to get their hands on those treasures. Because it was risky. Entering the private study of this mansion's master and tampering with the shelves was just too risky. Yet today, finally someone rummaged through that particular shelf.

And Ferid knew from one glance just what that someone took from it: an old gun and the map that would allow them to escape from this vampire city. Books and storage boxes next to the spots where those two items were left, had been arranged by that someone with special care to look like nothing had been touched, and that, in itself, was a dead giveaway. In these things, one either needed to arrange everything like it was before, or just leave everything in disorder.

Ferid walked up to the shelf and took the old tome he had put the map between the pages of. There was no map in it anymore. That made him smile.

"How cute," he whispered.

But this meant that it had begun.

There could be no doubt that those children from the Hyakuya orphanage, Mika, a boy named Yuu and the rest, were, indeed, the test subjects for the Seraph of the End magic research project - something that vampires were

forbidden to have anything to do with. There was a rule set up in the vampire world that when vampires discovered the Seraph of the End experiments being carried out, they were obligated to destroy the organization conducting them in its entirety.

And 4 years ago, on the day when the world collapsed, the Queen of this vampire city, Krul Tepes, received a certain order from the Progenitor Council: to destroy a Tokyo-based organization known as the Hyakuya sect that conducted the Seraph of the End experiments. Following that order, Krul mobilized the vampire troops and marched on Tokyo.

But the Seraph of the End had been activated. Although the attempt to stop it midway had been successful, the human population was reduced to 1/10 of what it used to be as a result, due to a raging virus. That, however, was not regarded as much of a problem by the vampires. Long before the catastrophe, many of them thought that the human population had grown too much.

What the vampires could not allow to ignore was the Seraph of the End experiments. Everything pertaining to them was to be destroyed. That was the vampires' law.

Yet, despite it, Krul Tepes hid Mika, Yuu and the other test subjects from the Hyakuya orphanage and kept them here. Needless to say, that was a grave act of betrayal. If it was found out, the punishment of being immured into stone for eternity would be awaiting her.

That was why she didn't openly protect Mika and the others. If she had tried, it would have made the possibility of the Progenitor Council finding out and punishing her all the more likely.

Ferid highly suspected that she knew about him sucking Mika's blood. He made sure to make a show out of it, sucking Mika's blood in front of the vampires that were Krul's proteges. But she still didn't interfere. Maybe she was waiting for Ferid to lose interest, or, possibly, worried about the possibility of someone noticing something, was contemplating how to deal with it.

"...But then again, if Mika-chan and Yuu-chan were to run away or to be killed, even she would get angry," Ferid muttered, tapping rhythmically at the book that had the map interposed between the pages previously with a finger.

That was why it all was going to start very soon. And from there, it would unfold fast. He had designed all kinds of plans in the course of several hundreds of years, but in just a few short years to come, everything would come into motion.

First, Krul would make a move. And she was a third progenitor. Then, in response to her actions, the other high ranking progenitors would make theirs.

All of them were stronger than Ferid himself. He was only a 7th progenitor. And only those of the 5th rank and higher were selected to the Progenitor Council. He couldn't win in power against any of them. What was necessary to take on those powerful vampires was plans, luck, brains and...

And also,

"Have got to enjoy myself when I have the chance."

Tonight, Mika and the other children would try to run away, seeking freedom. Seeking a future and hope.

And Ferid would playfully ruin it for them. That would force this story to start spinning, no doubt.

Even though it took a few centuries to orchestrate it, Ferid himself didn't see the full picture of that tale yet. The test

subject Mikaela appeared to be the completed product, but Ferid didn't know whose plan it was that triggered it in the first place.

That was why he had no idea how to act and what to do in case of a failure. He hadn't decided what to do with the children yet either. Would Krul come to interfere if he started killing them all? Or would it unfold in some other way?

Of course, he had certain wishes on his part as to how he would prefer it to go, but...

"It is a lot more amusing when you don't know what will happen, isn't it."

With this, he slammed the book he was holding shut with enough force for the resulting pop to resound throughout the room.

♦ ♦ ♦

Later that night, the tale had begun just like Ferid had expected it to.

The children made an attempt to escape the city. And Ferid killed them.

Mika's face was overflowing with despair as he felt his responsibility for what was happening. The boy named Yuu-chan hadn't given up till the end, despite the situation, despite what he was witnessing happen around him.

Mika, holding the gun, attacked Ferid. He was moving so slow. So painfully slow. Those were the movements of a child. A human child.

Ferid severed his arm off. But Krul had yet to show up. Then Ferid thrust his hand into the boy's abdomen, tearing through it. And yet, still no sign of Krul.

Did she not mind a "Michaela" dying here like this?

Just when he thought this...

"Uooooooooooooooah!!!"

...Ferid heard a voice.

Yuu picked up the gun and pointed it at Ferid. It would be so easy for the vampire to dodge it. In the first place, that gun wasn't something that could kill a vampire. As long as it wasn't loaded with silver bullets, that is. Haha.

Ferid observed Yuu out of the corner of his eye.

What a desperate face the boy made. He glared murder at Ferid and, doing what he could to protect Mika, tossed, "Die," pulling the trigger.

A loud bang resounded in Ferid's ears. From the corner of his eye, Ferid saw the bullet emerge and start its approach to him. He could see it perfectly. Not yet. Not yet, not yet, not yet, he could still dodge it. He could see it in the minute details, everything up to how it was rotating as it flew through midair. There was no way that gun could kill him.

But why not let it penetrate into his brain, Ferid decided. That would give the boys hope. And he liked their hope-filled faces. As well as the faces they made the moment they lost that hope.

If a bullet was to hit them in the brain and tear through it, even vampires would lose consciousness for a while.

He would probably not be able to watch what would become of these two, but he was sure that what would be would be. It was a lot more entertaining when the tale was not set in stone.

Ferid could foresee most of it though, because most of it was something that could be planned and anticipated.

That was why even Ferid sometimes needed to sleep for a while, just like Crowley when he lost consciousness in the coffin.

The bullet reached his head. Breaking through the barrier of his cranium, it penetrated inside. Upon reaching his brain, it destroyed it, impeding its functions.

“...”

Ferid's consciousness shut down.

Regenerating. Regenerating. Regenerating. Regenerating.

♦♦♦

Regeneration complete.

♦♦♦

Consciousness returned to Ferid.

It was just when Yuu was escaping from the vampire city while crying and screaming. But that was all according to Ferid's plan. From the start, he was going to let Yuu live. His partner, waiting outside, would take care of the boy, no doubt.

The surroundings were full of the smell of blood. The smell of the children's blood. All these kids were subjected to experiments at the place called the Hyakuya orphanage. For that reason, they had similar blood running through their veins, but even among them, the scent of Mikaela's blood was the strongest. It gave off mysterious charm that was whetting Ferid's appetite.

The organization known as the Hyakuya Sect that raised Mika had to know what meaning the name "Michaela" was loaded with. A boy carrying the Michaela factor was born one in tens of millions. Finding such a child was incredibly difficult. And now that the world was in ruin and the human population had been extremely reduced, it was a nigh impossible task.

But right now, such a boy was bleeding badly, and it was beyond doubt now that he would die. Humans couldn't survive when they lost so much of their blood.

Lying in the puddle of his own blood staining the floor, Mika whispered barely audibly, "G-Good... If at least Yuu-chan... escapes... then I can..."

That was the last words he was able to force out. The last words on the verge of death.

Just then, low class vampires who were supposed to keep an eye on the livestock appeared in numbers. One of them held Mika down, another one headed to where Ferid lay.

"What's going on?! Ferid-sama was shot!"

"The h-humans rebelled! The damn livestock dared lay a finger on a noble! Kill them!"

Why were these low rankers clamoring so much, Ferid wondered.

Mika was hoisted up by the neck. Despite it, the boy managed to smile. "Haha, ha, do it... If Yuu-chan escaped... I

don't mind dy—"

It was at that moment that another voice rang. It was the voice of a woman - no, of only a girl yet.

"Stop right there. That human belongs to me."

She showed up, Ferid knew. She finally was here. The vampire Queen and a 3rd progenitor, Krul Tepes-sama, had made her entrance at long last.

Her declaration left the low ranking vampires mightily surprised.

"Q-Queen..."

"Wh-Why is Your Majesty here...?"

The Queen didn't deign the question with an answer. Because she, too, couldn't help responding to Mika's blood. All the space around them was filled with the bewitching smell of the blood of a Michaela.

Eyes fixed on Mika's form still being held in the air by a low ranking vampire, Krul smirked greedily. "My, my, spilling so much of that delicious-smelling blood... he is beyond saving now, huh."

Scooping a little of the blood still trickling out of Mika with a slender finger, she licked it. Mika's body gave a start and shivered.

That blood must have tasted divine. After all, blood was at its most delicious when a human was in the throes of death.

Krul spoke up in a chilly tone, "...So? What is the meaning of all this, Ferid Bathory?" She sent a glare Ferid's way.

So it appeared that the curtain had been rung up. From now on, any mistake would probably result in Ferid's death. Even a 7th progenitor like him would be killed like any other low ranking vampire. It was impossible to win against the top ranking progenitors.

And what Ferid was doing right now could only be viewed as revolt and disobedience. He would be killed. One mood swing from the Queen, and she would lop off his head and leave it in the sun. Or maybe order for it to be immured into stone.

If that happened, it would spell curtains for Ferid. To err was not an option to him.

In addition...

"...Haha."

...he felt a rare surge of thrill running through his body and almost making it quiver.

But he didn't let it show on his face. He started his explanation in a dispassionate and detached manner. Letting his lips curve in a smile, he sat up, spread his arms and opened his mouth like an actor performing in a play. "...Well, well, if it isn't our Queen, Krul Tepes. It has been a while. You look lovely as ever."

Staring down at Ferid, Krul replied, "Oh, thanks. How good it is to see that your grinning mug still looks disgusting as ever."

"How heartless. And here I was calling on the power of my love for you despite having just been shot in the head with a gun to try and put on a smiling face just for you, you know?"

"Aha, love for me, eh? What you love is the authority I have."

"Fufu, I will not deny that I love that, too."

Except Ferid didn't care about it. He had no slightest interest in anything. He was only interested in the moment, in

the here and now. In the excitement that the possibility of being killed here and now brought. He felt pleasure from the possibility that his meticulous preparations he put his best effort in, slowly building them over the span of hundreds of years, could be reduced to nothing in less than one breath.

Come on, someone, please wreck my plans. Or rather, tell me how much did you invest in your own plans? Wrecking them may feel good, too.

Krul continued, "And? You, a 7th progenitor, have been shot by human children? That has got to be a joke. Do you expect anyone to believe that nonsense?"

"Oh, but it is true."

"No. You purposefully set them up to run away. The seraphs I kept. And one has escaped." She pointed her finger in the direction Yuu had run away in. "And the other is dying," the finger pointed at Mika who was about to lose consciousness from the bloodloss.

Ferid felt another surge of excitement at those words. Shivers ran down his spine.

Krul had voiced the name of the forbidden experiment herself, without any prompt. Seraph, she clearly said.

If anyone found out, she would be punished. Needless to say, she was perfectly aware of that, too. Yet she went and said it anyway. For some reason.

It was her attempt to sound out this whole situation, most likely. By bringing up the seraph subject herself, she wanted to see if Ferid knew something, and if she could confirm that killing Ferid here and now would not result in worsening the problem, she was perfectly ready to do just that and kill him on the spot.

However, if Ferid had made arrangements for the information about this matter to get leaked out to the Progenitor Council even in case of his death, then there was a need to question him first.

So she was trying to gauge him. To assess if he knew something, and in case he did, how much exactly. As well as what he was trying to achieve here.

"..."

If Ferid had to guess, he would say that right now Krul's mind was preoccupied with the latter question. Krul had made an off-hand remark about Ferid loving her authority earlier. That was a trap she set up to trick him into revealing his plans. Ferid had found out her secret, yet he hadn't reported it to the Progenitor Council; it had to be because there was some reason or something that he wanted for it. That was how her thoughts ran, Ferid was sure.

Of course, he made it so that she would think like that. After all, she was stronger than him in raw power, had more authority and outranked him in just about everything. Without prior preparation, it was impossible to even stand before her without fear.

But there was one thing she didn't know. Namely, that it would be all harmlessly over for her if she actually killed him here. Ferid had made no arrangements for the information to get out to anyone. His reason was simple: he would never do such an inelegant thing that would spoil this long-awaited thrill for him.

That was why she should have just killed him on the spot. Tearing off his head, taking away his ultra-violet protection ring and exposing him to the sunlight would have allowed her plans to run smooth and secure for a while.

If only she killed him. If only she did it, it would be all over just like that.

Come on, Krul. Come on, Queen. Your call. Your move. What will you do to me?

Ferid grinned, enjoying every step he took as he tread on the thin ice.

"If you can explain yourself in regards to this, do it this in—" Krul started, but Ferid, a grin on his face, interrupted, "Isn't it you though who has some explaining to do? Last time I checked, involving oneself with the curse of the Seraphs was considered a grave violation of the law in the vampire world. If I say one word to the Progenitor Council— He was cut off.

"...Ah? I didn't quite catch that. What were you going to tell to the Progenitor Council?"

"Like I said, if anything about this matte—"

The words didn't finish falling out of Ferid's mouth as the Queen leaped off the floor with terrifying speed, intending to pin him down.

It had begun, flashed through Ferid's mind. His mouth spread in a toothy grin without his intention, but the face he was making might have betrayed his panic and impatience, too, he felt.

He reached out a hand to hold Krul back, but she caught it easily, dragging Ferid's entire body along with it like it was nothing. It was like resistance was futile. Krul swung her hand shortly, and Ferid's arm got torn off. The arm sailed through the space and dropped to the floor with a dull thud.

It was one-sided. Completely one-sided. As expected of the great 3rd progenitor. And to make it even worse, she wasn't even serious. She was not someone Ferid could hope to win against in a direct confrontation.

He got caught by the neck. It would be easy for her to tear off his head, no doubt. Yet, she didn't. Slamming Ferid's body into the ground, she smiled with a beautiful, amiable and terrifyingly lurid smile.

"Aha, I still didn't quite hear you? Run it by me again, will you?"

But those words didn't scare Ferid. She had already made a grave mistake. She had made the wrong call.

The Queen, just as her status befitting her, should have just laid everything to waste, without lending her ear to the blabbering of some small fry crawling at her feet—

Yet she got "scared".

Ha, hahaha, hahahahahaha.

Oh boy, just how cute she was! And how foolish. *Use that pretty head of yours, Krul Tepes, seriously.*

Ferid squeezed out while being strangled, "How mean, Krul. Although it can be reattached, it still hurt when you did that to my arm."

"Should I do the same to your head?"

Yes, she should. Except what Ferid voiced, putting on a troubled frown, was, "...Well, that would be inconvenient. Alright, I admit my defeat. I will not dig into this matter any deeper."

"..."

"I promise. To begin with, even I'm not arrogant enough to think that I can go against you and still live here."

Would she accept these words? That was her last chance. Her last opportunity to get away from him.

But at that, Krul released her grip on Ferid's neck and stood up. "...Alright. But if I see you snooping around this matter again..."

"No need to worry. I happen to value my life, I assure you."

With this, the negotiations were over. Ferid would be let live. He would also receive somewhat preferential treatment in regards to influence. In exchange, he would keep his mouth shut about Krul's secret. That was the kind of negotiations that had been held here, according to Krul's judgement.

Instead of killing the small fry here and risking the information getting out right after, she wanted to buy herself a little more time. The time she needed for her own plans to come to fruition.

“...”

That was right. Everyone had ideas and plans. And a few of hers, that she thought to be her own, were something that Ferid set up a few centuries prior.

But it wasn't like Ferid knew everything either. After all, she was a great 3rd progenitor. Perhaps, she shouldered a darkness that was deeper than anything someone of the lowly 7th rank could imagine. But then again, Ferid had his rough guesses about that, too. What she was particularly partial to was the matter of her older brother, Aschera Tepes, abruptly disappearing along with the first progenitor, Ferid knew.

“...”

But well, that was it for today. It was enough for the time being. Having been started without being brought to an end immediately, the tale would continue.

Ferid stood up and went to pick up his torn-off arm.

“Get lost.”

“Yes, yees, ma'am. But I will be back. Since I love you so much.” Ferid turned on his heels and started walking away.

His hearing registered the sound of the queen clicking her tongue behind him, while his sense of smell was assaulted by the scent of blood. The bewitching scent of *that* blood. That boy's blood. But he belonged to the Queen now. And was about to die, too.

Except she would save him, no doubt. She was going to give him her blood and her curse.

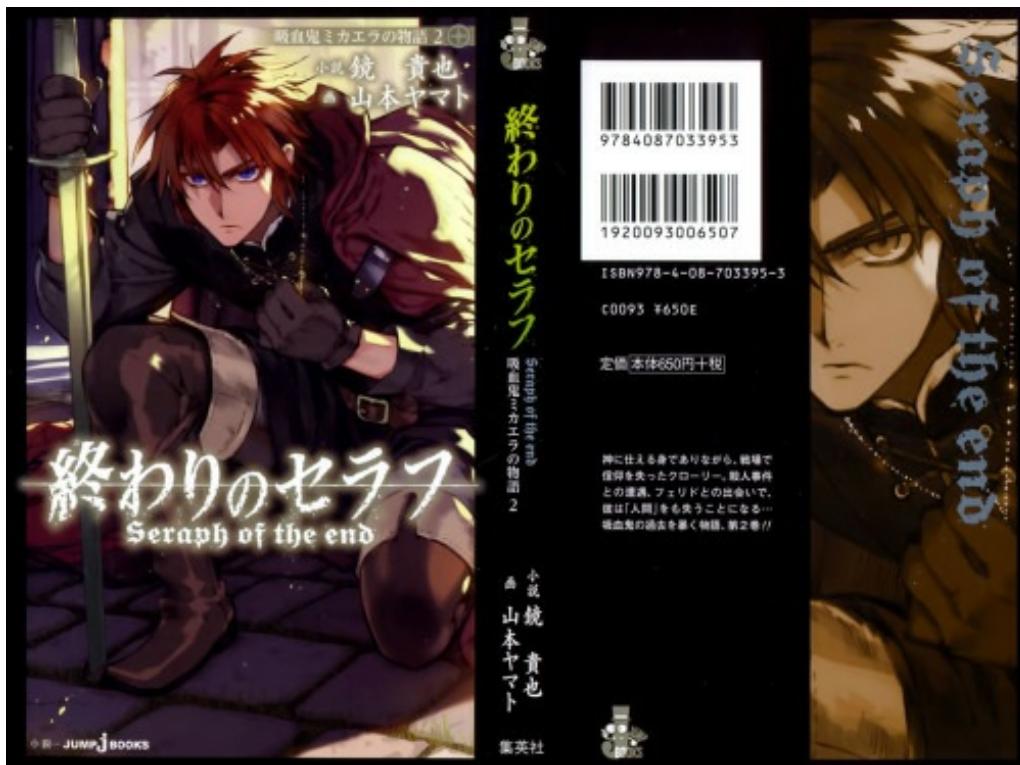
Another tale.

Another vampire.

One more tragic vampire tale to be added to history of this world once again.

CHILLY TERRITORY

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Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Epilogue (volume 2, pages 229-238)

Mikaela's Story

Every time Mika closed his eyes, he saw it - the time he had spent with his family. Not with his birth family. With his true family.

The life they led probably counted as nothing short of horrible. All of them were either neglected by their parents, or subjected to violence, or abandoned, and after that, even the world collapsed, and they got locked up in a place without a future, forced to live every day under the vampire reign, side by side with death, and eat garbage-like food.

No one was there to protect them. They were only children, yet they had to huddle together in order to desperately try to survive.

And yet, every time he shut his eyes, Mika always saw his family's smiling faces behind the closed lids. Saw Akari's smile. And the toothy grins of the smaller kids. And Yuu-chan, who was also there, by Mika's side, watching the rest with a troubled face. Yuu-chan would always say that he had no family, yet he never failed to be kind to all of them, and at the end, cried for them, even saying that he had finally found his family.

And yet, what had he done. What had he done.

It had been 2 years since then. 2 years had passed since Mika got separated from Yuu-chan and turned into a vampire.

In these 2 years, he hardly talked to anyone. He simply had no one to talk to. Since he was surrounded only by vampires.

Ah, no, there were humans, too. The humans that were kept as livestock. But the eyes the livestock regarded him with were those of someone seeing a monster. Seeing a subduer, a ruler.

To make it even more unbearable, when Mika himself saw humans, his appetite got stimulated. He wanted to drink human blood. He craved it. Hungered for it. Lusted after human blood to a vulgar extent.

Denying drinking it to himself was an exquisite torture. But he had managed to avoid drinking human blood so far. The Queen that turned him into a vampire was providing him with her own blood, so he hadn't been degraded to a monster sucking human blood yet—

But for how much longer would it still work...

"...Yuu-chan," Mika mouthed, close to a moan.

And yet, despite everything, he still had hope, because Yuu-chan was alive. Despite the blunder he had made. Even if he himself had been reduced to such a vile monster, to him, there still was—

But that was when his thoughts were rudely interrupted.

"Hyakuya Mikaela," someone called him.

It wasn't Yuu-chan. It was a voice from the world of reality where Mika lived at the moment.

Mika opened his eyes. And when he did, the same old world that was under the vampire reign, with vampires calling the shots, was around him, unchanged.

Still, if anything had changed, it was the fact that he no longer was livestock locked up in an underground city; he got to see the sky now.

He was dressed in a white military uniform made exclusively for vampires; and at his waist, there hung a rapier that sucked the blood of its wielder, also developed exclusively for vampires.

"Hey! Listen to me, rookie!"

A vampire that formally was Mika's superior was apparently saying something, but Mika didn't really listen. Neither had he any desire to.

It was raining. A really heavy shower, at that. The sky was pitch black, and it was impossible to tell if it was day or night right now. Military aircrafts flew across the dark sky, bombing the earth beneath.

This place was a location somewhere in the Eastern Europe. Allegedly, dangerous humans - livestock - not knowing their place, yet again carried out experiments that could end the world. And the vampires came to wipe them off the face of earth. To keep the world in peace and order, as it went.

"I won't hold back on the account of you being a favorite of a noble person!" Mika's superior raised a fist.

Mika just gazed at it. The falling raindrops. The fist being brandished.

All of that looked to him like it was happening in slow motion. To him, who was no longer human. To him, who had been given the blood of the 3rd progenitor, Krul Tepes.

Mika could probably count the innumerable falling raindrops now if he wanted. The shades of light and dark were distinguishable to him with clarity. And he could also hear sounds acutely. Ever since he had become a vampire, everything about the world became beautiful to his eyes - except that he stopped caring about everything save for blood.

That was what despair was.

No, he still had some humanity left. He wanted to see Yuu-chan. To see Yuu-chan once again.

If Yuu-chan survived outside, somewhere in this crazy, wasted world, Mika wanted to reunite with him as a human once again. Not for the sake of blood. Neither for the sake of satisfying his appetite. For the sake of saving Yuu-chan, saving his family.

"Look at meee!" The superior yelled angrily.

His fist was about to connect with Mika's cheek. Before it could, Mika caught his hand and glowered at him.

"Are you disobeying me, bastard?!"

Shut up, you ugly bloodsucker. How about I just tear off your arm?

Mika tensed his arm, holding the vampire's hand. The superior hardly felt the pain of it, he knew. The vampire's sense of pain was dulled. But if Mika put more power in his grip, he would be able to tear the entire arm off.

The superior glared daggers at him. "Let go of my hand. I'll kill you."

No, for this guy, it was impossible. And the guy himself had realized the fact by now.

But just then...

"Hey, enough. The humans are your enemy. So don't waste the time on worthless squabbles in this terrible rain," a voice said.

It made the superior turn around swiftly and straighten his back. "Sir, my apologies, Crowley Eusford-sama."

The name made Mika lift his head and take a look. He saw a tall man with red hair, likely belonging to the noble class.

For this mission, a few nobles were brought in to participate. But it wasn't like Mika had any interest in them, in any case. As far as he was concerned, he couldn't care less about what the vampires did.

An even higher ranking vampire said from behind Crowley then, "Okaaay, let's do this~ Kill all the humans who experiment on the Seraph of the End. Everyone, are you ready?"

It was none other than Ferid. He was the one in command of this time's operation.

Ferid stared at Mika. And grinned. Mika didn't look him in the eye. There was no need to. But Ferid still approached him.

"Hello, Mika-kun. I see you were assigned to my unit."

"..."

"It has only been 2 years since you became a vampire, no? Have you become accustomed to it yet?"

"..."

"If there is something you don't know, you can always a—"

"Shut up."

“...Fufu, I shall guide you. As your elder. Ah, by the way. Would you like to come to my mansion once this mission is over? I will tell you about my past—”

“Not interested,” Mika said curtly.

He wasn’t the same as he was back then. Back when he was but livestock kept alive for his blood only.

“Oh really. I think it would be a story of great interest to you though... But well, let’s finish the mission first. Crowley-kun.”

“Mm?”

“Let’s begin.”

“Yeah.”

Crowley raised his hand up, then lowered it down.

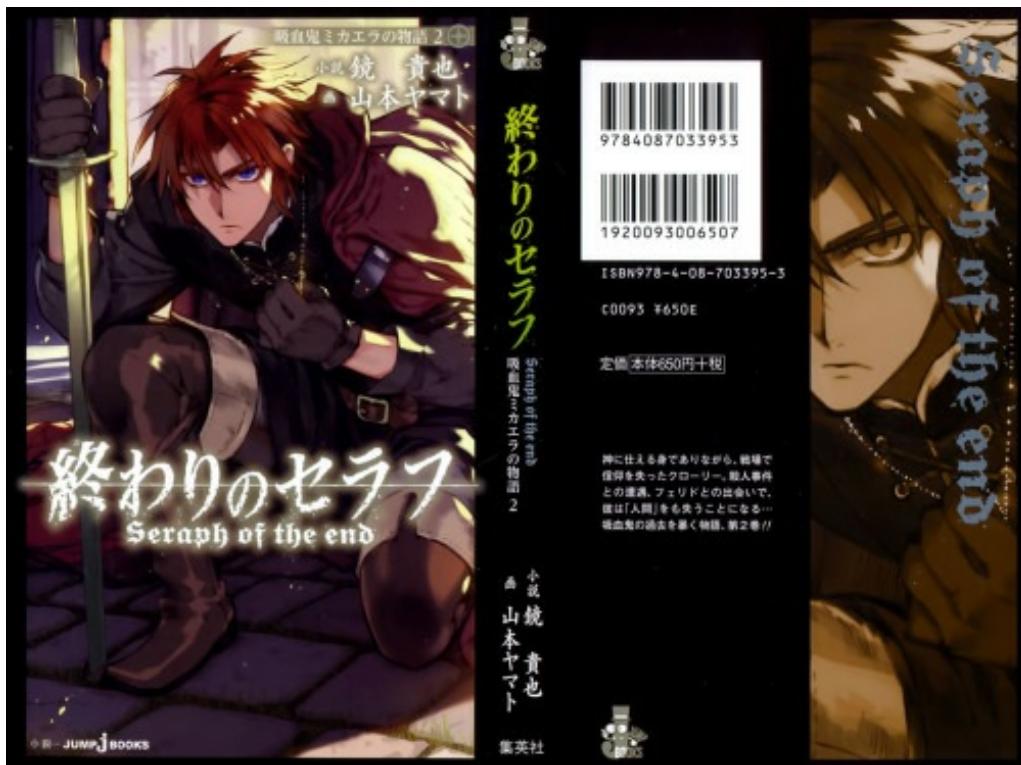
It had become the signal for the vampires to start annihilating the human organization located in Europe.

And on that day, I had come to see with my own eyes how ugly and how conceited humans were, conducting the forbidden experiments.

It has been two years since then. I have yet to drink human blood. My physical growth has yet to stop. And this is the story of vampire Mikaela, 14.

CHILLY TERRITORY

 chilly-territory.tumblr.com/post/144860181865/seraph-of-the-end-the-story-of-vampire-michaela



That's it. Now, to wait for the fall and volume 3 to come out.

Seraph of the End: the Story of Vampire Michaela 2 by Kagami Takaya

Afterword (volume 2, pages 240-241)

The story has progressed, and right about the time when Ferid and Crowley reappeared in the manga, too. They will be playing a very active part from here on out.

Those of you who start reading a novel from the afterword, please stop reading right here, because there are spoilers ahead.

This volume marks the end of Crowley's story as a human and opens the chapter, stretching into eternity, of his story as a vampire. From this point on, the narrative will be centered around Mika, but involving Crowley, and also Ferid, Krul, Saitou, and... an even bigger wave of mysteries awaits ahead (those of you who read the Ichinose Guren: Catastrophe at 16 series have already felt the shock from Saitou being mentioned here, I think).

Anyway, since the Story of Vampire Michaela series is a grand scale vampire chronicle, it is interesting to write. The most interesting thing about it is that the emotional rises and falls are somewhat off-tone.

Maybe it could be attributed to the Medieval Ages, where death was so close to every person, being the setting, or maybe to the vampires, who lost life, being the main characters. Or maybe it is due to the fact the story literally spans over thousands of years.

That's why, compared to the novels with Guren as the protagonist and the manga with Yuu as the protagonist, I kinda chose the technique to make it more exciting by having few such emotional highs and lows, and well, I sorta

develop the story and the characters, taking their emotions into account and imagining the tone of the story as “dark blue”, and just generally having fun in the process because the opportunity to write this kind of opus is a rare one, no doubt.

Then again, I have to admit that it is quite troublesome and takes serious effort to keep this story fully consistent with the stories of the manga and of the Guren novel series (lol).

However, in the manga, Yuu-chan has finally started thinking that he wants to get to the core of this whole story, so the mysteries from the Guren tale and the Michaela tale will come together in one place and bear fruit, and the full picture of this whole opus, “Owari no Seraph”, will suddenly start becoming visible.

The near future developments in the manga will make those of you who read the novels repeatedly exclaim “No way!”, I’m sure. In short, what I want to say is, read everything, okay? (ehhh, lol)

Or rather, I’ll be counting on your continued support!

Kagami Takaya